Collection of Essays

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by

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[I have long been interested in The Discrepancy and its possible effects. This essay can be thought of as addressing the question of why The Discrepancy arose in the first place. My answer in brief: Once it began, Gaia came to foresee that the development of "civilization" would be a problem for itself. It therefore "decided" to get rid of humankind, and further decided that the best way to do so was to allow civilization to develop in such a way that it would be self-destructive. However, humans—most, at least—would be otherwise convinced, and therefore willing instruments of their own demise. In the process many other species would be destroyed, but this would be a minor price to pay to rid Earth of humankind.]

Explaining An Anomaly

Over the past decade a field of research that has emerged in Psychology is what might be called Happiness Research—discovering what makes people happy. Given that the research undertaken has lacked the depth and sophistication of comparable anthropological research,[1] one must not put too much stock in the results of that research. Still, the research of such individuals as Edward Diener, Robert Emmons, Daniel Kahneman, David Lykken, Christopher Peterson, and Martin Seligman have provided valuable information on the sources of happiness, and have identified such sources as the following:

- Having several good friends with whom one interacts frequently and harmoniously—which can include having a pet.
- Maintaining good relationships with members of one's family (and spouse's family—if married or living with a "significant other").
- Having a loving partner—including a homosexual one.
- Having a job that matches one's interests and abilities.
- Developing "outside" interests that one can commit oneself to during one's "free" time.
- Giving money to help support causes that help further your values.
- Being involved in a religion.
- Being actively involved in activities that help others—especially ones that involve direct contact with such people.

[1] For example, Colin M. Turnbull, *The Human Cycle*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983; David Maybury-Lewis, *Millennium: Tribal Wisdom and the Modern World*. New York: Viking, 1992. Also of relevance here is a book such as George Edgin Pugh, *The Biological Origin of Human Values.* New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1977. A very readable book on the subject from a brain researcher and preventive medicine specialist is Robert Ornstein and David Sobel, *Healthy Pleasures*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1989.

- Developing certain attitudes—such as attempting to eschew feelings of envy, and learning to be forgiving and grateful for what one has (and not just materially). (If one allows oneself to be constantly envious, angry, etc., one is in effect allowing others to rule one's life—thereby simply adding to one's unhappiness, and perhaps even setting oneself up for psychosomatic disorders.)

The above are not the only sources of happiness—and, of course, the sources of happiness for one person are not necessarily the same as those for another person. Also, happiness should not be equated with well-being: an individual may have a deadly disease (thereby lacking well-being) but nonetheless be happy—which fact suggests that one's *subjective* views—in this case regarding one's happiness—should not be considered apart from *objective* factors affecting one's well-being.

My intention here, however, is not to discuss happiness *per se* relative to well-being. Rather, it is to note that the empirical research that has been done relative to happiness has provided little support to the view that *material consumption* is the primary source of happiness. If one takes a course in Microeconomics while in college, one likely will learn that the models that Economists have created to explain the economic behavior of individuals acting as household representatives (i.e., behavior involving purchasing or selling) assume that satisfaction is gained from the consumption of material goods and services; that, indeed, the demand for such consumption is virtually insatiable. Economists do not claim that such consumption is the *sole* source of satisfaction—which would be inconsistent with their acknowledgement that households *do* exist. Because their focus is on consumption, however, they likely leave many students with impression that consumption *is* the key to happiness—so that after graduating, rational behavior on their part would involve getting the highest-paying job possible. They may also learn—although not being explicitly taught this—that they are permitted to use any means possible to achieve the highest income possible, including ones on the other side of legality.

Not only do some college students learn—or at least infer—from certain of their courses that their goal in life should be to maximize their earning power, and therefore enroll in those courses that will most contribute to that end. The prevailing "philosophy" in our society—even for those who have not attended college—is that income maximization should be their primary goal, and that they should take those (legal or quasi-legal) steps that will contribute to that end. Income maximization is, of course, not just an end; it is also a means to making those purchases of goods and services that (supposedly) will bring one happiness—a large house, expensive cars, expensive parties, expensive trips, etc. That is, spending on oneself, one's family members, and one's "friends." But in many cases income maximization is pursued also (or instead) as an end—as if one were in a contest to "beat" others simply in terms of seeing how much money one can acquire, ideally getting on the list of the richest individuals in the world.

Such a pursuit on the part of some has various *consequences*—including for the society. My focus here is, however, not on that fact. Rather, it is to note that the happiness research that has been conducted over the past decade provides us with no basis for explaining such behavior. Logically, one would pursue those behaviors that would contribute to one's happiness (and well-being). But given that this happiness research has not concluded that materialism and selfishness are the path to happiness—quite the opposite, in fact—we have the rather strange situation in our society that irrational behavior is the norm.

The realities of behavior in our society relative to the findings of happiness research suggest that the "promptings of human nature" (to quote Thorstein Veblen) are playing little or no role in motivating behavior in our society. For if individuals were acting in a manner that accorded with their biologically-given natures, they would be engaging in the sorts of behaviors that researchers have linked to happiness.[2] The fact, then, that the dominant driving force in our society is the drive for "success"—developing one's abilities, but only as a means to maximize one's earning power—suggests that something other than human nature is behind this tendency.

A possible candidate for an explanation of this anomaly is one provided by Thorstein Veblen in one of his typically brilliant works, "Some Neglected Points in the Theory of Socialism."[3] Veblen's starting point was the assumption that (p. 392) "Man as we find him to-day has much regard to his good fame—to his standing in the esteem of his fellow-men. This characteristic he always has had, and no doubt always will have." That is, Veblen began his argument with the assumption that an abiding feature of human nature is that any human has an innate need to be thought of well by others. If one is living in a "primitive" society—or in a small town in contemporary [1892] America—one will know all other members of one's "community"—and those others will know you as well, of course. Thus, one will be judged by one's *behavior*—in the light of the mores that prevail in one's "community."

The (p. 392) "existing [i.e., in 1892] organization of society," however, presents difficulties in satisfying this need. What characterizes modern society is that it is becoming ever more urbanized. People are moving from rural areas to cities (with many immigrants also landing in cities), especially drawn by the industries located there, and in finding a place to live likely know none of their neighbors. Over time one may come to know some of one's neighbors, and be known by them. But what about the hundreds of others that one encounters—in stores, in theaters, while walking down the street, etc.? One will encounter numerous others whom one will *never* get to know. How does one "announce" to them the sort of person one is? Veblen's answer (p. 393): "To sustain one's dignity—and to sustain one's self-respect—under the eyes of people who are not socially one's immediate neighbors, it is necessary to display the token of economic worth, which practically coincides pretty closely with economic success."

What Veblen suggested, then, is that this tendency of human nature—developed under circumstances very unlike an urban-industrial society—will, in coming in contact with such a society, be forced to adjust, and the adjustment (in 1892) took the form of focusing one's life on achieving economic success. For Veblen, however, that was not the goal. It was merely a means to the goal of being able to purchase many (expensive) things, and then displaying them—"conspicuously," Veblen added. This would satisfy a psychological need that had developed millennia earlier—if not perfectly, then at least in the best possible manner under the circumstances. What Veblen apparently did not foresee is that a day would arise when money-making would be pursued more as a game than as a means of satisfying a psychological need—

[2] Interestingly, they would also be acting in accord with Biblical values (e.g., Job 29, Matthew 25, etc.) in that "doing for the neighbor" has been demonstrated to be a major source of happiness—even though acquiring for one's own use is constantly "pushed" in our society, and not only in advertisements.

[3] In (pp. 387 – 408) *The Place of Science in Modern Civilisation and Other Essays*. New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1918. This article originally appeared in the *Annals of American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. II, 1892.

unless one thinks of high placement on a list of richest individuals as satisfying some sort of psychological need.[4]

Veblen, writing in 1892, did not have a body of happiness research to draw upon, and therefore was not able to discuss the matter in great detail. However, he did sense that the modern way of life was "out of whack" so far as human nature is concerned, and made numerous comments, in his various works, that relate to this matter. I agree with Veblen on the matter of our way of life being discordant with our "design specifications" (as developed via evolutionary processes). What I question, however, is that the societal situation should be regarded as the ultimate cause of the anomaly referred to earlier. Granted that the obsession with acquisition that can be observed today may have its roots in the earlier history of our country—that certain habitual ways of thinking that developed a century and more ago have been perpetuated down to the present (with the modification that it has acquired a "game" component). But can we explain this anomaly on the basis of a disjunction between human nature and societal characteristics—even by bringing in the historical factor? I would like to offer an alternate explanation here—one that has received its inspiration from Eugene Linden's *Affluence and Discontent: The Anatomy of Consumer Societies*.[5]

My starting point is the observation that ours is a high-pollution society—especially on a *per capita* basis. This is because our major energy source is petroleum: we use it to power our automobiles (the usage of which is promoted by our living patterns and "individualism") and trucks; we use it in producing goods; we use it as a raw material for producing chemicals; etc. Given that we value maximizing income, and then using much of it to buy things (the use of some being polluting), we are adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, thereby causing "global warming"—with the prospect (per, e.g., James Lovelock) that our species will be extinct (or nearly so) by the end of the century. Thus, it is not rational for us to continue to do so, but little prospect that we will change our ways—in time, at least.

Indeed, when one looks at Western history—especially through the eyes of Eugene Linden—one gains the impression that it has been a matter of adding ever more nails to the coffin. That is, what has been usually thought of as "progressive" development has had a dark side—making it ever more likely that we humans will bring about our own extinction. It's as if some Force—e.g., Gaia?—realized that it had made a mistake in allowing humans to evolve, and having come to this recognition has ever since been "pulling the strings" of us human puppets to cause us to engage in activities that we would view positively, thus welcome—unaware that we were being manipulated into bringing about our eventual destruction.

Thus, this Force has enabled us to develop the means to destroy ourselves (especially via technological developments), has provided us with motivations that would guide our behavior in a self-destructive nature, has provided us with plenty of diversions so that we would not learn of

[4] I don't. Rather, I think of a competitive ethos as being one with roots in the nature of the society—including its intellectual superstructure (e.g., Darwinian thinking). Which is why Prince Peter Kropotkin's critique of Darwin (specifically Thomas H. Huxley, rather) was given little attention—despite its grounding in solid empirical observation.

[5] A Seaver Book. New York: The Viking Press, 1979. I am referring especially to Parts II and III in Linden's book (pp. 63 – 115).

the possible existence of this Force, etc. This Force was unable to prevent climate scientists such as James Hansen (of NASA) arising who would make dire predictions, warning us that unless we acted decisively within the next 10 years to reverse the trend, we might be doomed. But the Force "knew" that we humans had created so much infrastructure that could not be changed easily, and that we would not easily be persuaded to change our ways, that it would be successful in its efforts to destroy humans—so that we humans would go the way of the dinosaurs. Many other species would also perish, of course, but that was a small price to pay to rid Earth of humankind.

It is, course, "crazy" to talk about some sort of mysterious Force "out there" that not only has a mind, but a mind that had "decided" to rid Earth of that cancer, humankind. But (in this Darwin year) if Darwin could reify and personify Natural Selection, why can't I "invent" a Force—just as Darwin invented Natural Selection[6]—and attribute some sort of decision-making ability to that Force?!

I don't mean here literally to suggest that some evil Force has been guiding Western (and now world) history, and leading it to the abyss. However, how else does one explain the fact that so many of the developments that have occurred after the Agricultural Revolution millennia ago have the effect of making our continuation as a species ever more doubtful? If I knew of a better explanation, I would accept it. But I don't!!

[6] To say that Darwin "discovered" Natural Selection is tacitly to assert that natural selection (as *he* defined it, not, e.g., Ronald Fisher) actually occurs. Actually, it is highly doubtful that that sort of selection plays much of a role in Nature. For example, in explaining human evolution it likely has played no role whatsoever. Rather, the sorts of selection that have played a role are (1) environmental change (Stephen Stanley), (2) predation (Robert Sussman), and (3) sexual selection (Nancy Makepeace Tanner).

May 20, 2009

Addressing the Global Warming Problem

Those who believe that "global warming" is occurring—which includes virtually all climatologists, and most educated people—also believe that global warming is basically anthropogenic in its origin. That is, the fundamental cause of the global warming that has been occurring is fossil fuel usage by humans. And given this identification of causation, it is not surprising that "believers" also support, as the solution to the global warming problem,[7] a switchover—and soon—to alternate sources of energy.[8]

The latter is a *reasonable* decision, to be sure. But is it one that follows *logically* from the premises stated? If it does, fine—case closed. But if it does not, the implication is that several other factors are also playing a causal role, which possibility leads to several questions:

- What are those other factors?
- What is their importance relative to fossil fuel usage?
- Are these other factors subject to manipulation? Phrased more precisely: How amenable is each to human control?
- What steps would need to be taken to make changes in a given one of these factors? (Steps, of course, in the direction of "greenhouse gas"-emission reduction.)
- Who should assume leadership in taking those steps? That is, what organizations and/or types of individuals should provide the requisite leadership?

Unless one categorizes oneself as like one of the "observers" in Hans Christian Andersen's story of the emperor's new clothes, one should recognize—but may not—that fossil fuel usage is but one factor in a constellation of factors responsible for global warming. No objective basis exists for identifying those other factors, but I find it useful to identify the following three factors as also implicated in the global warming problem:

- The *array* of economic activities in our society.
- The *magnitude* of those activities. (This might, e.g., be measured in terms of the total gross income of all firms and other organizations.)

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[7] The term "global warming problem" must not be understood too literally. Global warming is not so much a problem as a cause of problems—as, indeed, as a cause of a cause of problems. For example, it is a cause of the melting of glacial ice, and therefore a cause of rising sea levels. That, in turn, is, e.g., forcing some Pacific island peoples to abandon their homes and move to Australia.

[8] Specifically, liquid fuels derived from plants or algae, and electricity generated by wind, photovoltaic cells, nuclear energy, or the burning of biofuels.

- The *geographical distribution* of those firms/organizations—especially with reference to the locations of places of residence.

If we were to assume that there would *not* be a switchover to "safe" energy sources, we can conclude that changes in each of these factors could result in a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions:

- A reduction in the variety of *kinds* of activities could yield such a result. For example, if we categorize goods as "necessities" and "luxuries," a reduction in the production of superfluous goods (i.e., luxuries) would result in a lesser amount of greenhouse gas emission—given that pollution is associated with the production, transportation, marketing, and consumption (consumer trips to retail establishments specifically) of such goods.

- A reduction in the *variety* of kinds of economic activities would, then, result in a reduction of the *magnitude* of such activities, but so would a reduction in even "necessary" economic activities. How could this occur without imposing hardships on people? One possibility lies in the nature of our food supply. When one makes a trip to a supermarket, the foods that one finds for sale originate from all parts of the world. If households were to make an effort to produce more of their own food (as happened during World War II), much of that economic activity occurring elsewhere would be diminished, thereby resulting in pollution reduction. Granted that many households in our society live on lots too small to permit much food production, and local ordinances often prevent the raising of animals for meat. But consumers *do* have the ability to change their eating habits (away from exotic foods), and have the ability to purchase locally-produced food. There do, then, exist possibilities for reducing the pollution associated with the production of necessities.

- A change in the *geographical distribution* of economic activities would also result in reduced pollution. For example, if consumers would make more of an effort to "buy locally," the pollution associated with long-distance transportation would be reduced. And if residences were located closer to places of employment, a reduced length of "journey to work" would mean reduced pollution.

  A major geographical problem in our society is that population is so dispersed that for many, automobile ownership is a necessity—so that owners of such vehicles become *indirectly* responsible for the pollution associated with the manufacture of automobiles, as well as *directly* responsible for the pollution associated with automobile operation. Were cities to have a high population density, and without substantial suburban areas, residents would be able to rely on public transit for their various trips—thereby reducing

pollution substantially.[9] However, many city dwellers grew up in a small town/rural environment, and live in a city only out of necessity; they therefore are attracted to suburban areas, with their low-density situations. And even if this is not the case, because land ownership confers status on a person, people are attracted to the low-density situation offered by suburbs and exurbs.

We can conclude, then, that even if no switchover to alternate sources of energy were to occur, greenhouse gas emissions could be reduced—and I have not even made reference to savings associated with conservation measures. If the ideas mentioned above (including conservation measures) were acted upon *and* a switchover to alternate energy sources were to occur, not only would greenhouse gas emissions be reduced, but so would energy usage *per se*. So that the cost savings associated with the latter would itself be a "plus"—not only in that it might have environmental impact implications, but also (positive) "quality of life" ones.

This brings us to the second of the five questions posed earlier, however: What is the relative importance of these other factors relative to fossil fuel usage reduction? Were actions of the sort mentioned above engaged in, would they contribute significantly to pollution reduction? I have no quantitative statistics to cite here except to state that were some of the above-mentioned ideas implemented, it is clear that there would be pollution reduction—how much I am unable to say.

However, there are *qualitative* benefits associated with some of these ideas. For example, if one were to produce food for one's household, this food likely would be of higher quality—and safety—than what one can purchase in a supermarket, and these factors would have health implications. There are also mental health benefits associated with gardening. And if one lived closer to one's place of employment, one might be able to avoid the burden of automobile ownership—especially if one could walk/bike to work, and use public transit for other trips. Trip-making is also a time-wasting activity, so that an ability to avoid trips would give one more time to engage in pleasant and/or useful activities.

Granted that there would be benefits—of various sorts—associated with action on some of the ideas presented above, but are they actually amenable to change in a positive direction—so far as global warming, etc., are concerned? Here is where the real difficulty arises, for the changes mentioned are ones that would all involve "lifestyle" changes—and people are reluctant to make such changes. People tend to happy with the fact that they can purchase so many different kinds of foods in their supermarkets, and can purchase all sorts of luxuries (if they have the money!). Many are attracted to suburbs for their spaciousness (as well as good schools, etc.), and see automobile ownership not so much as a burden as a purchase that gives them mobility and (perhaps) status. They may not find a long journey to work appealing, but resign themselves to one because they perceive the benefits of suburban living outweighing the negatives. They may be interested in doing some gardening, but have no interest in attempting to produce most of the food they would consume.

[9] Such a situation would, however, work at cross purposes with the principle of local food production—at least in the sense of making difficult household food production. Still, the residents of a compact city could learn to rely primarily on food produced in the city's immediate vicinity.

In short, the "mindset" associated with most Americans would appear to be such that they are unwilling to give much consideration to ideas for change that would involve substantial "lifestyle" change. If faced with the option of driving an electric automobile rather than a gasoline-powered one, they may see the two options as approximately equal, so that they could be easily coaxed to "go" with an electricity-powered vehicle. But if, e.g., they were to consider the possibility of moving close to their place of employment, they might not find such a possibility attractive because suitable housing might not be available—if only because the place of employment was in a business area lacking residences. Thus, a prevailing mindset combined with a structural situation would make implementation of the above-mentioned ideas a difficult matter.

Because of this fact the questions of what steps should be taken, and with whom providing the leadership, would appear to be moot. So that it would appear that those who are working on the development of alternate energy sources and those who are promoting that development and its implementation (such as Jessy Tolkan, executive director of the Energy Action Coalition) are correct in limiting their efforts to switching from fossil fuel usage.

I am convinced, however, that what's needed is drastic change in our society—not only because of the global warming problem, but the well-being one as well. The Discrepancy concept plays a large role in my thinking, and I am also mindful of the fact that the happiness research of recent years concludes that material consumption is not the path to happiness. I have concluded, then, that if we were to move in the direction of an eco-communitarian society, this would be the best path to "salvation." Such communities would be low-consuming, and especially of locally-produced goods; as a consequence, they would be low-polluting—attempting to eschew the use of fossil fuels as much as possible, and working on the development of alternate sources of energy; and the social situation offered by such communities would be conducive to good mental and physical health. In various papers that I have written before I have developed these points, so will not do so here.

Let me conclude by noting that Philip Slater's *The Pursuit of Loneliness* is one of my most prized possessions, and that my thinking has definitely been shaped by that book—especially the kind of society that we should be working for. I would, of course, add to his discussion that we need to address the global warming problem and that my strategy for achieving his kind of society represents an important contribution. But *Pursuit*—along with *Earthwalk* and *Wealth Addiction*—are, in my mind, worthy successors to Veblen's works. Indeed, they are clearer in message, and even pack more "punch," than any of Veblen's works (something I hate to admit!).

March 28, 2009

Our Societal Philosophy

A society is a system, meaning not only that it consists of a series of parts, but that those parts work together, are mutually supportive. Which does not mean, however, that the various parts function as equals, for one component tends to be dominant, with the other components supporting this dominant component. Currently, and for the past several centuries, the Economy sector has been dominant, with the Educational, Media, Religion, Technology, etc. sectors playing a subordinate role to the Economy sector,

The dominant sector achieves its continued dominance in part because the prevailing worldview rationalizes that position—makes it seem "natural," inevitable, etc. Because peoples' thought processes tend to be oriented in a direction supportive of the dominant sector, they have difficulty developing a coherent critique of that sector and its dominance, and also have difficulty developing an alternate worldview.

There may be societal forces operating which—serving some Grand Design of which we have no knowledge, and over which we (therefore) have no control—cause (a) changes in the nature of a dominant sector: for example, with the Economy Sector there was first commercial dominance, then industrial, and now financial; and (b) cause one type of dominant sector to give way to another. If this is the case, a worldview is simply a part of this change; so that although it may appear that at times the development of certain ideas result in societal system change, in actuality some more basic change is occurring, and the worldview change, rather than being an "uncaused cause," in actuality is a result of this more basic change.

At any rate, our current societal systems are leading us to catastrophe—perhaps even to our species's demise—and needs to be replaced. I have offered my (5-"wave") strategy for societal system change elsewhere, and there will not repeat it here. My motive for writing the following is that given that our thinking, rather than being truly objective, independent, is controlled by the dominant worldview, it might be useful to try to make explicit what the essentials of that worldview are. Perhaps by making it explicit we will be in a better position not only to become more cognizant of its nature, but in becoming so cognizant, will gain some ability better to perceive its deficiencies. Having come to appreciate its deficiencies, we may be able not only to develop a believable worldview built on Job 29/Matthew 25. Having created such a worldview (in its essentials, at any rate), this might help motivate the creation of a new society (per my strategy). And I should add that members of a New Word Fellowship might be in a particularly good situation for not only working out such a philosophy, but beginning the work of creating some of the "building blocks" of that New Society.

My goal here is a modest one, that of attempting to articulate the nature of our society's current guiding philosophy. My thinking on this subject was first stimulated by Chapter 4 ("The Ethos of Industrial America," pp. 29 – 46) in Donald Gilbert McKinley's *Social Class and Family Life* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964). I have moved some distance from McKinley over the years, however, and in my most recent effort (the one presented below) have, in fact, tried to create a version of our guiding theory that is as attractive as possible—so that I am deliberately creating a substantial challenge for those who would create an alternate one. In fact,

point 2 in my argument represents a challenge to my own commitment to the Discrepancy viewpoint—one that I have written fairly extensively on—always favorably!—over the past few years. My "theory" here that it will be much more valuable to create a rather formidable opponent than a mere chump.

Here, then, is my most current version of a summary of our society's guiding philsophy:

1. Humans, like members of other species, are *variable*: They (a) vary in their interests; (b) in the kinds of abilities they have—mental and physical (the word "skill" being typically used in this latter case); (c) with a given *kind* of ability, they vary in the *degree* to which they possess the ability; and (d) they vary in *how many* interests and abilities they have—some with few interests/abilities, others with an amazing number.

2. Modern society—for the first time in human history—potentially offers humans a situation that meets their needs as a collective. What I am referring to here specifically is that the modern society not only has within it many different (remunerative) positions that vary in the *kinds* of required abilities associated with them. In addition, those positions vary in the degree of ability/responsibility they require—with those positions requiring the most ability often also involving the most responsibility. In a very real sense, then, the modern society offers "something for everybody"—so that regardless of one's interests, kinds of abilities, and level of ability, there is likely a "place" for one within the society.

3. However, for a modern society to realize this potential, it is essential that the society be structured (i.e., have institutions, laws, mores, a prevailing mindset, etc.) such that obstacles are not placed in peoples' pathways as they pursue positions in the society. This means in particular that government must not interfere in the workings of the economy. Its primary role (internally) should be to ensure that honesty and fairness exists through (a) establishing appropriate laws, (b) a system to encourage people to follow those laws, (c) a system to ensure that violators are apprehended and tried, and (d) a system such that those found guilty of violations are punished—either via fines or incarceration (or both)—and/or rehabilitated.

4. A fortunate fact for the realization of a sort of society that conforms with human nature is that although humans vary in various respects—in kinds and levels of ability, and in interests—they also have an important characteristic—one that is, in fact, innate—in common. That is an innate tendency to be active, some of that energy being directed at an attempt (if but unconscious) to self-actualize. So long as the society is structured properly, the society's members' energies and motives can, then, receive expression—with a "natural" society thereby being attained.

5. As individuals act on these innate tendencies, competition inevitably occurs. This is, however, a friendly competition, and the results of the competition are accepted by all—for everyone knows that the sorting that occurs as a result of the competition has produced the best possible result for every individual—and for the society as a unit.

6. The sorting results in virtually everyone being able to find his or her niche—a position that one is interested in filling because it "fits" ones abilities (mental and/or physical) from both a kind and level standpoint.

7. Because virtually everyone is able to find his/her niche, everyone has a high level of psychological well-being: one is able to develop a sense of personal competence, of personal potency (Rollo May), of being productive, of making a contribution to the society (i.e., feeling useful), etc.

8. Because all occupants of positions are occupying them with a high level of competence, productiveness, and enthusiasm, everyone—as a consumer—benefits from (a) a great variety of products/services being available, (b) at a high level of quality, and (c) at the lowest possible cost (because of efficiencies that production organizations—including "service" ones—are able to enjoy).

9. The higher the level of a position, the higher the level of ability required by its occupant. It must be kept in mind, however, that although one's initial position would be gained on the basis of one's interests and abilities (kinds and amount), that one's occupance of a position gives one experience that increases one's knowledge and/or skill—but this is more true for some people than others. Those for whom it is true will find that as their knowledge/skill increases, opportunities for "moving up" will occur—in particular as others either "move up" or "move on" (i.e., either leave the organization or retire).

10. Compensation will vary with positions, especially in that the more the ability and/or responsibility associated with a position, the more the compensation. However, compensation is fair, and even those who are compensated least receive an amount of compensation that enables them to satisfy all of their basic needs and live in some measure of comfort.

    A question that arises is why the reward system in a modern society is one oriented toward monetary compensation. Granted that the more one is compensated, the more one will be able to purchase in goods and services. But what is the relevance of that?—given that one receives one's well-being from being in the right niche. Ostensibly the expectation here is that because one has the ability to buy more, one will; but what is the expectation as to what one will do with that which one purchases? There are two possibilities: (a) one will use the excess above what one needs to do things for one's

local community (or local region, etc.) and/or to give to people in need (e.g., families of "breadwinners" who have died unexpectedly, who have become incapacitated via accident, who have become ill, etc.); (b) one will use the excess to purchase luxuries for one's home, luxuries for one's use (e.g., yachts, expensive automobiles), for travel, for extravagant entertainment, etc.

Of these two possibilities, the expectation is that because people are naturally selfish they will use any excess primarily for the latter purpose—engaging in the former sorts of activities only if they feel this will increase their status with others who know, or know of, them. Being selfish *per se*, and acting on that natural proclivity, does not add significantly to one's happiness (although being well thought of by others may add some to one's happiness). One engages in selfish behavior not out of choice (because one thinks it will add to one's happiness) but because that's simply how one is "programmed" to act. Evidently there is something about selfishness that causes one to think that the higher the position one is able to attain, the more one should be compensated; this is generally known throughout the society, so that in fact such a relationship comes to exist within the society.

11. One's income—assuming that the societal system is operating without any interference (from government, in particular)—reflects the magnitude of one's contribution to the society. It follows from this fact, then, that if one's income is low, this means that one's societal contribution is low. Ideally, that is, a low income simply reflect a lack of ability—so that one is simply unable to contribute more than one does. However, realistically speaking, this can reflect that (a)one is making an insufficient effort (i.e., is lazy), (b) has developed bad habits (some of which—such as smoking—waste one's money, and even put one's health at risk; some—such as drinking excessively—mean that one cannot keep a job that matches one's ability; or can do that, but squanders one's money by, e.g., gambling), etc. So long as people are applying themselves and have not developed foolish habits, they will be able to have a way of life that enables them not only to satisfy their basic needs, but live with some degree of comfort. However, if one chooses to live in other than a rational manner, one may find it difficult even to satisfy one's basic needs—so that one not only penalizes oneself, but any dependents one has.

12. Given the previous point, one can assume that if someone's basic needs are *not* being met, most likely the fault lies with the person involved. There are, however, exceptions: a death may occur to a family's breadwinner, the breadwinner may be incapacity by an accident or illness, etc. This means that there is such a thing as a "deserving poor"—people who are poor even though they have lived by the society's rules. Such people deserve assistance; in fact, such people should receive help from the society—in the form of its government.

13. However, those who have brought their problems on themselves merit no sympathy—or assistance, governmental or private. Assistance will do nothing to stop them from

> behaving foolishly. They have free will, and therefore have it within their power to change their ways, and if they choose poorly, thereby bringing problems on themselves, they should not be helped—for that will simply encourage them to continue their foolish ways. Their dependents, however, must be recognized as innocent victims, and helped. On the other hand, if one is having dependents beyond one's ability to support them, one should be either sterilized or banished from the society. The course of action to be taken in this case should be made clear to all of the society's members, so that if they violate this rule, they will know what action will be taken against them. Society has no obligation to support unproductive members of the society, except under the circumstances already mentioned above.

The point of my exercise here is to serve as a "resource" in an exploration of the matter of whether it is possible to have a complex society that has a different motivational structure than the one we have. A society, thus, within which there would not be predators and parasites. (I would like to think that this question was also in the back of Veblen's mind—which is perhaps why I am so attracted to him,) What I am wondering is whether it is possible to have a (a) complex society (having an extensive "division of labor") that is (b) also a non-discrepant society (see, e.g., Noel T. Boaz's *Evolving Health: The Origins of Illness and How the Modern World is Making Us Sick*, 2002), (c) that offers a sustainable way of life (in a world where other societies do the same), and (d) has a general motivational system consistent with Job 29/Matthew 25.

It should be obvious that such a society would be wonderful to live in—and it is difficult to believe that humans do not have it within their powers (intellectual and others) to create such societies, and blanket the earth with them. Yesterday I read a relevant article on the CommonDreams web site by a Dr. Robert Costanza of the University of Vermont. I e-mailed an appreciative note to him, along with three of my papers presenting ideas and proposals). In return, he sent me a paper of which he was one of the authors, a paper that has some value, but evinces the typical conventionality—and thus lack of value—in the thinking of academics when it comes to proposing solutions to problems. What this tells me is that not only will government and business not produce answers to our problems (as if one should expect answers from them!), but neither will academics (and certainly not those in "think tanks"!—most of which are far right).

It will take independents such as myself to come up with answers to our problems, but the problem we face is getting our ideas in front of others who can act on them—either activist sorts who can attract money, or people who themselves have money.

I would first like to arrive at a statement of the existing societal philosophy that seems to be realistic. However, ideally it would also be stated in such a way as to be easily critiqued. The next step would then be to critique it. Finally, an alternate philosophy, based on empirically-supported facts regarding "human nature" would be created that would be supportive of Job 29/Matthew 25 type of behavior: such behavior is natural, and gives the greatest amount of well-being. (I should also mention Luke 12:48: From him to whom much has been given, much is expected—as a guiding principle for members of the Good Society.)

Comments/Questions

1. The philosophy tacitly assumes a static society—one day, one week, one season, etc., is virtually identical to the next. No changes occur in technology, demand, immigration, outsourcing, etc.

2. Is selfishness a trait that has no correlation with, e.g., income? So that even after one attains an income that enables one easily to satisfy one's basic needs, and even take advantage of certain luxuries, that one's degree of selfishness is not affected?

3. Regarding the "competition" referred to in my "take" on our philosophy: Just how does it occur? For example, does it occur via a placement testing procedure? Via interviews?

4. Is "natural" living just a matter of doing what one is interested and able to do? Are there not certain needs so far as stimuli and behaviors are concerned? Is there not also a need to use one's brain in a certain way? Presumably the brain developed as an instrument that gave one a survival advantage—but specifically in the context of a way of life that involved gathering and hunting. Given that such a way of life involved having one's mind immersed in the "surround" much of the time—paying attention to the contents of the surround, and observing relevant behavior occurring therein—do we not still have that innate need? ("Relevant" behavior" would pertain to potential food—so that males would pay attention to animal behavior, and perhaps fish in some cases; and females would pay attention to vegetation that could serve as food.) In our modern society about the only occupation that has a similar requirement in driving a taxi—although in that case one, rather, learns where different things are located, and the best route to getting to them from a given location. Most modern occupations are not natural in terms of the behaviors (or lack of such) that they require, the stimuli to which they expose one (or fail so to do), and the way one is required to use one's brain. (Often I am "given" ideas, which I must then write down. For example, in recent weeks I have been giving a great deal of thought to Darwin's theory, and developing, then, abandoning, various approaches to writing a book presenting my ideas. However, the past few days my mind hasn't been focused on that matter at all, as I haven't been given any ideas regarding how to organize a book on Darwin. On the one hand this has been somewhat frustrating, but also liberating—because I seems I have been focusing my mind on my particular surround, and this has been liberating and even pleasant.)

5. Insofar as placement tests are used to place (or not) people in jobs or schools, etc., these having the purpose of gauging one's interests and aptitudes, do they measure what they ostensibly measure or, rather, do they indicate the social class from which one comes?! So that they then function to keep one in the social class from which one came?!

6. The philosophy ignores the fact that our society has a social class system—a system that plays a significant role in affecting the opportunities that are available to one.

7. I suspect that the ancients lacked a sense of self—at least to the degree that we do. (I'm referring here specifically to the gatherer-hunters—the only people who existed prior to the Agricultural Revolution.) Our sense of being individuals has in part been nurtured by thinkers such as John Locke, and more recently by Ayn Rand, and even Abraham Maslow (and others in the human potential movement). The focus on individualism has had as a concomitant a valuing (implicit) of selfishness: one should do for oneself. Individualism did not need to develop in that direction. It's conceivable that Paul's body analogy could prevail—so that one is encouraged to develop one's abilities with the idea of using them to bring benefit to others as one employs one's abilities. (Also the statement in Luke that much is expected from those to whom much has been given.) Regarding this latter point, people must be made to understand that they did not choose their abilities. Rather, they inherited certain abilities, but even that is not the complete story. For their being in this society—vs. an "underdeveloped" one—gives one advantages so far as the development of those ideas is concerned: in there being many positions in our society, there will be an ability to find a niche for one's abilities. Plus, our society offers opportunities in developing one's abilities. In addition, one should come to realize that one can benefit from the development of others' abilities—if, that is, one lives in the right sort of society. If one lives in such a society, one will be anxious to see others develop their abilities because one knows that everyone develops their abilities so that others can benefit from their employment. It then makes sense to foster the development of others, because there is the possibility that one will oneself benefit from this. True selfishness is of a very different character than the selfishness that we know. The study done several years ago that found that other-oriented people tend to be happier than self-oriented ones is an interesting one, because it demonstrated that even in the rotten society that we currently have, it is still true that selfish people are not happy. We already know that riches do not bring happiness.

   It seems to me that if we understood what true selfishness entailed, we could not only have that sort of selfishness, and it would be thought of positively. However, we need a sort of societal system that fosters that sort of selfishness. One feature that I believe such a society would need to have is that it provide (near) absolute security—but also be structured so that people could not take advantage of this feature.

8. At some point the notion of levels in the society acquired an "edge"—people began to think that because they were at a high level, they were superior to others—and therefore felt that they should not associate with inferiors; did not owe anything to inferiors, and could even treat such people badly; deserved much for themselves in terms of things (even though this would not make them happy) and status and deference; etc. Why did

this happen? Did Darwin's use of "survival of the fittest" have any impact on peoples' behavior, and mainly give them an ability, in better conscience, to do to others what they had already been doing, perhaps with more intensity and resolve also?

9. The geographical dimension of the society is given no attention by our societal philosophy.

10. The ownership of production units and other things plays no role in the philosophy. Are certain things left out deliberately (such as ownership), other things inadvertently (as geographical structure)?

11. Sizes of ownership units, along with their diversity (e.g., in what they "produce"), is not a part of the philosophy. Is an example of something left out deliberately—because the elite doesn't want people to think about this?

12. There is no reference to disease—whether caused by our way of life ("discrepancy") or other factors. Why pretend that this phenomenon doesn't exist?—because so many of our diseases are "diseases of civilization," and the elite is dependent on a continuation of "civilization"?

April 8, 2011

A "Meaningful" Solution

Alton C. Thompson

In my "Our Primary Problem" I asserted that the primary problem facing us—Americans and humans—is the threat of "runaway" (associated with "global warming"), with a secondary problem being that we have, over the centuries, developed ways of life increasingly discordant with the "design specifications" that we acquired prior to the Agricultural Revolution (which began about 10,000 years ago). I suggested that a way out of the first problem lay with the development, and deployment, as soon as possible, of alternate sources of energy, but that that solution would only worsen the second problem. The way out of the second problem, I argued, would seem to be way-of-life change, and I identified two possible courses for that solution—that of self-sufficient homesteading, and the development of self-sufficient "intentional" communities. I noted that moving in that direction held the *possibility* of addressing both problems simultaneously, but that it was unlikely that that course would be taken by enough people actually to solve either problem. I then left the reader with the likely prospect that our species will be basically extinct before the century is over. (Sorry about that!)

Although I made no mention of it in "Our Primary Problem," I *do* believe that there is another possible course—one that holds considerable promise, and is a "different sort of animal" than the ones discussed in the earlier paper. Different, in that it is not offered as solutions *in itself* but, rather, as a *means* to them—hence the use of quotation marks around "meaningful" in the title above. What I propose here, then, as a "means" is a special type of discussion group, what I will refer to here as a Structured Interaction Group (SIG).

What led me to this "discovery"? I'm not sure in what *chronological* order the following "events" occurred (likely they interacted one with another in their development, after all), but if I impose a logical order on those "events," I would need to start by mentioning a growing realization, on my part, that the older I get, the more I recognize how little I know. I know that as one grows older, one supposedly gains in wisdom, but as I grow older (I'm now 71) I'm not even sure about that!

Given this "enlightenment," I have come to see myself as one of the blind men in the story of the blind men and the elephant. That is, I have come to realize that the total Truth escapes me—but also escapes everyone else as well.

However, I also recognize that each of us possesses *part* of the Truth, so that given that, it would make sense for people to get together in small groups to *share* their truths. The question that then arose was: But what "rules," if any, should guide this discussion process?

It seemed to me that if discussion is allowed to proceed on a "free-for-all" basis, at least two problems will tend to arise. First, one or just a few individuals will tend to dominate the discussion—their doing so signaling the belief (if but unconscious), on their part, that *they*, and *only* they, have the truth in their possession, and that only *they*, therefore, are important. That is, domination of the discussion by a few individuals conveys the message that we are not all equal—even if those "few" don't *intend* to convey such a message.

The second problem with "free-for-all" sorts of discussions is that they often become "heated." Because of that possibility, some members of the group, knowing that this might occur, and feeling intimidated by that possibility, try to prevent it from happening by suppressing their views—so that what they *say* is not in total agreement with what they actually *believe*. In addition, if efforts to prevent disharmony fail anyway, so that the discussion starts to become "heated," what tends to occur is that:

- Any sense of solidarity which may have existed before within the group soon disappears;
- The meeting ends; and
- The group dissolves;—with
- Its participants perhaps then even becoming enemies who cease speaking to one another.

Given the strong possibility that free-for-all discussions might quickly degenerate into heated shouting matches, with the group then disintegrating as a discussion group, I concluded that for a discussion group to "work," it needed to have some definite structure. In developing—over a period of time—that structure, my inspiration (so far as I can recall) came from three sources, the first two of which related to *meetings* rather than to discussion groups *per se*. In addition, they had in common that they had their derivation in Judaeo-Christianity:

- Ideas generated by a "heretical" Christian of the first century named Marcus, and
- Contemporary Quaker (i.e., Society of Friends) practice.

The Marcus in question had created a type of meeting where the speaker of the day was chosen at random from among those attending.[10] Use of a random procedure was based on the ancient Hebrew conviction that it is *God* who chooses when selections are made at random (see references to the Thummin and Urim in what Christians refer to as the "Old Testament," and *Acts* 1:26—where Matthias was chosen to replace Judas.)

Contemporary Quaker practice, in contrast, involves members meeting, and waiting for the "Holy Spirit" to inspire someone (i.e., one or more) to speak (or sing and play a melody on a guitar, etc.); during a given meeting, thus, as many speak (etc.) as feel "led" to do so. But in neither Marcus's meetings centuries ago nor in contemporary Quaker "worship" services did (or

[10] Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*. New York: Random House, 1979, pp. 41 – 43.

does) any *discussion* occur—except perhaps *after* the meeting. Thus, I could not find a *complete* answer in these two sources.

I then turned to a Native American practice, and borrowed the idea of structuring discussion sessions by using a "talking stick" (or feather, etc.). Use of a "talking . . ." in the first place represents an admission on the part of all those present that each is somewhat "crazy" (!), but that a controlled (i.e., "ritualistic") sort of discussion might help each one become less crazy. Second, and related to this, use of this procedure might be conducive to (a) participants speaking what was on their mind, (b) a high degree of equality in how much time each used in speaking, and (c) civil discussions that didn't get out of hand (among other possibilities—some identified later).

Here's how this process would work (tentatively):

- Participants meet at some given location and time.
- Each writes his/her name on a slip, and deposits it in a container.
- Someone selected in advance (a functionary whom we might refer to as the King!) picks, at random, a slip from the container. That person becomes the Leader for that session. (Whether the belief prevails, within the group, that God was responsible for that choice would be expected to vary from group to group.[11])
- The Leader speaks about that which s/he feels "led" to speak (for no more than about 10 – 15 minutes, perhaps).
- The Leader then passes the "talking . . ." to the person on her/his left, and that person reacts to what the Leader has said (striving to be civil, of course).
- *That* person does the same, etc.
- If the discussion starts to become heated, the Leader is expected to ask everyone present to hold hands (and the others present are expected to comply with that request). Why? Because touch *connects* people—not only literally, but psychologically.

If one has been passed the "talking . . .," but wishes to say nothing (at that point), one simply passes it on. Thus, everyone is given an *opportunity* to speak, but one does not *need* to—unless, of course, one is the Leader for that session! The meeting continues until "time is up"—or no one has anything to add to the discussion.

[11] Just because I derived this idea from ancient Judaeo-Christianity, it doesn't follow that those who adopt the Structured Interaction Group *must* accept that belief. I am not particularly concerned about the belief structure of those who might adopt the SIG; rather, my interest is in it becoming adopted—by as many people as possible, regardless of belief system.

If the above gives a brief outline of what would be involved (tentatively) with a SIG, I offer the following as more *specific* guidelines:

- Members of the group must accept the above premises and conclusions; i.e., at least *that* much uniformity must exist within the group. They must regard each other member of the group (each other *human*, in fact) as their equal, and accept as a truism that one person's views are as worthy of expression and consideration as those of any other person in the group.

- Each member of the group should have an opportunity to "speak one's truth" and, indeed, ideally all members will speak for about the same length of time during a given session. This ideal likely would never be met, however, because during a given session one or more members may not feel "led" to speak (or speak much)—and certainly one should not feel an obligation to speak just for the sake of speaking. On the other hand, though, if one feels very talkative during a given session, one should attempt to restrain oneself: monopolization of the talking is strongly discouraged (and should, in fact, be *prevented* by the Leader).

- When one is speaking, one should feel at liberty to say what one genuinely feels "called" to say. Which is not to say, however, that one should resort to vulgarity, or impropriety in some way (e.g., speaking in an undiplomatic manner).

- When one is speaking, one should avoid criticizing others in the group, or trying to discredit what they say. One should show respect for others in the group—keeping in mind the Golden Rule principle, rather than trying to impose one's own point of view on the others present. If one has a viewpoint that is in opposition to one that someone else has expressed, one should simply state one's *own* (contrary) viewpoint without comment on what someone else has expressed.

- When one is *not* speaking, one should listen—not just be preparing one's *own* "speech" for when it is time for one to speak again. One is expected to be (or at least *become*, with time) convinced that one does not possess the whole truth; that, rather, one is like one of the blind men feeling the elephant. So that given that one wishes to know *more* of the truth, one needs to listen attentively to others as they speak.

- To help members of the group acquire the habit of listening to what others say, a short period of silence (roughly 30 seconds?) should be observed after someone has spoken.

- If discussion seems to be proceeding down a certain path "naturally," one should not (as Leader) try to divert it down some other path—either because one doesn't like that path, or because one has certain notions of where the discussion *should* head, and believes one has the right to divert the discussion in that direction.

- All should be aware of the danger of the group becoming too "cozy." Thus, each person present (and not just the Leader) should consider the possibility that at times s/he should act as a (diplomatic) "devil's advocate" (but only when it is one's turn to speak—unless one is the Leader for that particular session).

- On the other hand, there is always the possibility that the discussion will start to become "heated." It is then the Leader's responsibility to instruct all participants to hold hands (to repeat what I said earlier).

- One should feel free (when it is one's turn to speak) to introduce (harmless) levity into the discussion, from time to time, if one feels so inclined. In fact, I would encourage people so to do!

- Members of the group must recognize that what is said during a given session is not to be used as a source of gossip. Generally, a rule of confidentiality should be observed; if, however, one chooses to discuss, with non-group individuals, topics discussed during sessions, one is expected to be discreet.

- There is always the possibility that some who join a given SIG group will not "fit in" well. Therefore, a group should decide early on in its existence how it will handle that eventuality.

As a given group gains experience over time, it likely will add to this list of "rules"—or modify some of them. After all, I do not have a patent on the SIG, so that people are welcome to "run with it" in whatever direction they choose. Among those "rules" might be one that specified the ideal size of group, and how to proceed in the event that the "ideal" size becomes grossly exceeded. (My opinion, at this point, is that the ideal size is about 12, but I have not "set that number in concrete.")

Given that my intention here is that this paper complement "Our Primary Problem," it follows that I would like to see SIGs developed by people interested in addressing the problems identified in that paper. But, of course, people are free to initiate SIGs with other purposes in mind as well, and I welcome that.

Regardless of *why* a given group initiates a SIG, I expect that participation in one would result in:

- Learning on the part of all participants.

- Creative solutions to problems—indeed, creativity in more general terms.

- A sense of solidarity developing within the group—especially as the members reach a consensus on some matter.

- A feeling of energy and enthusiasm—indeed, a general sense of well-being—resulting from achieving a sense of solidarity.

- Decisions regarding actions to engage in by most, or all, members of the group, followed by actions themselves.

- Etc.

So far as I know, no SIG (by any name) yet exists, although I am currently making an effort to initiate one. Given, thus, that I can draw on no experience with the SIG, I can only guess at possible consequences of SIG participation. At some in the near future, however, I hope that there will be experience with this institution, so that more definitive comments can be made regarding it.

March 9, 2011

On "The Evolution of Morality"

I have placed "the evolution of morality" in quotation marks because my focus here is not on the evolution of morality but, rather, on *writings* on that subject. I cannot claim to be well-versed in the growing literature on that subject, but have done enough reading on the subject to know that the field has some serious problems:

- Discussions of "evolution" tend to invoke the concept[12] of "natural selection," introduced by Charles Darwin in his 1859 *The Origin of Species*. In that book, Darwin introduced "natural selection" as the process that explains (monotypic) evolution: Given (a) the Malthusian "law" of excess births, (b) intra-specific competition[13] (for survival) occurs[14] with any given species, this competition (c) results in the survival of those (and only those) best "equipped" (in inherited traits) to win in the competition, (d) some, if not all, of those individuals produce progeny, (e) which progeny inherit (via "blending" inheritance, Darwin thought) the ("superior") traits of their parents; this process, occurring year after year, results in "directionality" with the species—i.e., slow, steady, progressive change in the "success" variable (along with any other variables that happen to be correlated with the "success" variable, Darwin added).[15] This change he referred to (in effect, if not actually) as (monotypic) "evolution."

  Although modern writings that use the term "natural selection" tend to give the term a more generic meaning than Darwin did (one, indeed, that has no causal mechanism associated with it!), too many modern researchers "get the cart before the horse." They tend to *assume* that "natural selection" is the explanation[16] of whatever they are studying, without supplying a shred of evidence in support of that assertion. Which raises the question: If one knows *in advance* the "Why?" of something, why bother studying it?! To say that this is bad science, is to understate the matter, indeed!! In short, the concept of evolution has—because of its misuse—hampered progress in the development of

[12] It should not be referred to as a "theory"—for the simple reason that it isn't one! A theory is an explanation that is offered for a law—i.e., a general statement with firm empirical support. The explanandum of "natural selection" (i.e., that which it purportedly explains—slow, steady, progressive change) is by no means a law. A better term for "natural selection" (than either "theory" or my "concept") would be "model," meaning that it thereby has much in common with the *laissez-faire* model associated with Economics.

[13] That is, competition with conspecifics—members of the same species.

[14] For some reason Darwin did not identify migration as another possible response, nor did he refer to the possibility that whatever "excess" occurred might provide food to members of other species (i.e., to predators).

[15] One might add that the "winners" in this intra-specific competition would not only have certain *physical traits* to a greater degree than the "losers," but would also have more of a genetic proclivity for aggressive *behavior*.

[16] But given that they have removed any causal mechanism from "natural selection," how on earth can it be used as an explanatory concept?!

knowledge regarding animal behavior—whether "moral-like" or not. I believe that it was Brian Goodwin who complained, a number of years ago, that a fixation on evolutionary thinking has hindered progress in Biology—and I have no reason to disagree with him on this point.

- Related to this problem is that use of the phrase "the evolution of morality" suggests—without any support to back it up—that insofar as moral (or, as I prefer, "moral-like") behavior occurs, its basis is solely genetic—it is a sort of behavior that is explainable *solely* on the basis of inherited genes. Thus, one tends to go into one's research project assuming that one knows the *sort* of explanation (i.e., genetic) that is appropriate, so that one's only task is to identify the specific mechanism involved.[17] One doesn't look for other explanatory factors because of the tunnel vision that one has adopted. Again, this is not good science!

- In the literature one encounters terms such as genetic/reproductive fitness, selfish genes, kin selection, group selection, affect hunger, mutualism, direct reciprocity, or indirect reciprocity—terms that in too many cases are not only vacuous, but represent invented concepts that are then projected onto Nature, as opposed to concepts that have arisen through inferential reasoning from a large body of established empirical facts. In fact, the frequent reference to "costs" and "benefits" gives one the impression that the scholars using these terms are so impressed with the (alleged) "science" of Economics, that they are convinced that some of the prestige associated with Economics will "rub off" on their work by introducing the (bizarre) concepts of "costs" and "benefits" into their "research."

- It is understandable that scientists studying animal behavior "in the wild" and observing "moral-like" behavior would be excited about that discovery, and that they (or others reading about their observations) would then want to begin studying "animal morality." But doing so represents a case of "jumping the gun." Before engaging in such study, one should first study "associative"[18] behaviors—i.e, interactional behaviors (usually with members of the same species) that are non-conflictual: one should identify such behaviors, and then attempt to understand each—so that one can then study "moral-like" behaviors in the proper context. Indeed, even associative behaviors need to be put into the broader context of behaviors. Given that a proper context has not yet been provided for "animal morality," the field is floundering.

[17] I am being too generous here, for too often "natural selection" is invoked in a knee-jerk fashion—meaning that glib statements abound in the literature.

[18] Such behaviors are related to "affiliative" ones, but the term "associative" has the advantage that it is a purely *descriptive* term. "Affiliative" pertains to behavior that promotes group cohesion; in referring, implicitly, to *function* it brings in the matter of *causation*, and thereby ignores a crucial distinction—between description and explanation.

It seems to me that before any research on "animal morality" should proceed, researchers should first seek to get a good "handle" on associative behaviors. The first step in doing this would be to identify *types* of such behaviors, and I would offer the following as a tentative classification:

1. "Pure" communicative behavior. Communication is an interaction activity that is *associated with* many other interaction activities, but can also occur in a "pure" form. For example, individuals can be grouped together (e.g., around a fire) with their only activity at the time being communicative interaction—for the "purpose" of conveying information, entertainment, or merely "killing time."

2. Cooperative behavior. This is behavior engaged in by a group, with perhaps all members of the group engaged in the same sort of behavior or, on the other hand, the members engaged in different activities, with those activities being coordinated, and directed at a larger "purpose," one in which all of the members have an "interest."

    a. Food seeking.

    b. Protection from predators.

    c. Play (engaged in because of a need for physical activity, with the activities engaged in perhaps providing preparation for adult life, insofar as they are engaged in by the young).

3. Reciprocal behavior. This is behavior of a helping nature, engaged in with the "expectation" of reciprocal behavior being engaged in by the helpee at a later time. This can include sharing, providing comfort/consolation, etc. as examples. It can involve empathetic reaction, followed by response to that emotion; or it can involve sympathetic reaction, followed by response to that emotion. It can also involve an empathetic or sympathetic reaction followed by the absence of any reaction other than the emotional one.
    a. Grooming.

4. Altruistic behavior. This is behavior of a helping nature, engaged in *without* the "expectation" of reciprocal behavior being engaged in by the helpee at a later time. This can include sharing, providing comfort/consolation, etc. as examples. It can involve empathetic reaction, followed by response to that emotion; or it can involve sympathetic reaction, followed by response to that emotion. It can also involve an empathetic or sympathetic reaction followed by the absence of any reaction other than the emotional one.

Likely there are more categories of associative behavior that could be identified, but the above represents a start.

If the starting point is to identify types of associative behaviors, and then organize the types into a classification, this first step can—and should—be then followed by other steps:

2. Determine for each type of behavior the physical characteristics that an individual needs to have to engage in the behavior—i.e., the characteristics that *enable* the individual to engage in the behavior. (For example, are certain physical characteristics necessary, including neural, etc., ones; is a certain sort of cognitive ability necessary? Etc.)

3. Hypothesize the factors—in a *proximate* sense—that *cause* a given behavior to occur, and then test one's hypothesis (es).

4. Hypothesize how those factors developed—a better term than "evolved"[19]—and then test one's hypothesis(es).

I should also note here that associative behaviors tend to be associated especially with species that tend to form "sociological" groups and live in those groups. This in itself requires research into such questions as why do groups form, how stable are they, how do they change over time, how adaptable are they, etc.?

Also, there are such questions as:

1. What sorts of behaviors are associated with what species (and why)?

2. What intra-species variation exists in types of behavior (and why)?

3. What intra-group variation exists with a given species (based on such factors as sex, age, position in the hierarchy—if one exists, etc.)?

4. Given that the amount—and kind—of interaction that one can have with another can vary from one "other" to another, what empirical findings exist on this matter. For example, is the nature of one's behavior relative to another member of one's species affected by the frequency of contact (and is frequency of contact solely a function of one's geographical distance from the other)?

5. How should one bring such concepts as honesty, trust, fair play, forgiveness, etc. into the picture?

[19] Because "evolution" is a concept that is *gene-based*—that assumes that characteristics (whether physical or behavioral) have a genetic basis, and only a genetic basis.

In Praise of the Ordinary

Alton C. Thompson

The company for which I work celebrated its 50th anniversary on Sunday May 31, 2009. I had planned to attend the celebration, but given that my sister was hosting a family get-together the same day, I declined. As I reflect today on the company and its founder, however, it occurs to me that although I have had admiration for this man, perhaps that admiration has been misplaced. In fact, an irony occurs to me as I reflect on him.

The company was founded by a man with a Polish/Jewish heritage, whose parents had come to this country while he was young. Although his family was by no means wealthy, because of native intelligence, the acquisition of a good education, a willingness to work hard, and determination (along with a little luck!), he was able to develop a fledgling company into a relatively stable and large firm. In terms of the dominant value system of this society, this man has not only become successful, but has made an important contribution to our society—and likely he is convinced of the latter.

Where I find irony is in the fact of his Jewish heritage; for as I reflect on Jewish Scripture—the book of *Genesis* in particular—it occurs to me that God is said to have created, during a 6-day period, the various components of our world (and beyond), and to have pronounced his creation *good*. Although the creation process itself is presented as a step-by-step one, the impression is given that the end product was an integrated whole—in which the various components mesh one with another. The impression is given that although activities—including interactions—are continually occurring, these activities are of a basically harmonious nature. And although *motion* is a virtual constant in this world, *change* is not. God created what became a *system*; and although this system was (by definition) characterized by *dynamism*, it was *not* characterized by *temporal change*.

Given this latter fact, the implication given by the writers/redactors of *Genesis* is that God, having created what He pronounced as a *good* system, wanted it to *remain* as He had created it: it was a good system as it was, and could not become "gooder." So that the role given humans by God—that of steward—consisted of *maintaining* the integrity of the system, not *changing* it. But could I say regarding the founder of the company that I work for—a man presumably somewhat familiar with Jewish Scripture—that he perceived his role that way? Or, rather, had he acquired a conventional American mentality?—so that he saw his role as making a *contribution* to the society (a *technological* contribution in his case).

Now if one perceives one's role as being one of making a contribution, it does not follow that one's contribution will necessarily result in change of the Earth system. For example, if one composes music, creates a painting, does empirical scientific work, etc., one is making a contribution, but not a sort of contribution that is likely to result in Earth system change. Rather, one's contribution results in adding beauty (perhaps!) or understanding. If, however, one's contribution consists in developing new technology or an ideology, it holds potential for affecting behavior that will result in how one interacts with Earth and/or others. In short, it has potential for resulting—via direct and indirect causation—in *change* in Earth system.

I find it inconceivable that the founder of the company for which I work has had a conscious intention of changing God's creation (to adopt here the perspective of *Genesis*). Yet it is very possible that the innovations that can be attributed to him and his employees *have* played some role in changing Earth system. And if one takes all of those who have developed new things and ideologies, and examines the "fruits" of their efforts, it is certain that one would conclude that those efforts have been responsible for change in Earth system. Have, in fact, been the *primary* factors responsible for such changes.

We have tended to take for granted that those who have originated and introduced innovations have made a *positive* contribution. So pervasive, in fact, is this belief in our society that one does not need to be *taught* it. Rather, one simply *acquires* it in the process of living here. And although histories used to focus on reigns and rulers and battles, for some time now they have tended to focus on "accomplishments" and the resulting "progress." The very fact that positive connotations are associated with such words as "accomplishment," "success," "energetic," "productive," "ambitious," "creative," etc. is proof enough that the dominant value system in our society is based on the assumption that such traits are desirable.

But are they? Was Eugene Linden wrong in presenting, in *Affluence and Discontent* (1979), Western history as a story of anything but progress? As consisting, if anything, of developments that are propelling us toward disaster? My own conclusion on the matter is that Linden's history is one that I find convincing—and compelling. Although I do not develop herein a case for such a perspective (read Linden for one!), I agree with the general thrust of his presentation—and would add that (a) existing trends suggest that our emissions of "greenhouse gases" will soon (if they haven't already!) result in a period of "runaway"—i.e., that the negative feedback mechanisms that have been maintaining relative stasis will give way to positive feedback mechanisms, thereby resulting in rapid change in the global mean (among other consequences). This change will result (directly, and indirectly—e.g., via diseases) in many extinctions, and may even include our own! Underlying these events is the human development, and application, of technology (especially). And the irony here is the possibility that humans have been digging a grave for themselves, all the while being convinced that they have been digging for diamonds! In effect, humans have been committing "speciecide" while being convinced that they were creating an ever-better world.

Fortunately, although the beliefs and values that have been dominant in our society have been leading us to the precipice, contrary beliefs-values have not been entirely suppressed—and our "salvation" (if there can be such) lies in this fact. A century ago Thorstein Veblen argued that although a "pecuniary" mentality was dominant in our society (with its associated *de jure* mode of thinking), an "industrial" mentality (with its *de facto*, causation-oriented mode of thinking) was also (still) present. For Veblen, the latter was rooted in "human nature," whereas the former was not. And Veblen adopted an ecological perspective, at least in the sense that he saw the latter as the productive members of society, whereas the former were predators and parasites who lived off the society's productive members—being the dominant element in the society, and thereby the most highly rewarded!

Philip Slater (*Earthwalk*, 1974) has also perceived a dualistic society, with an even stronger ecological perspective. For Slater, it is "disconnector" concepts—such as ambition, honor, courage, self-reliance, and spirituality—that are the dominant ones that guide behavior; concepts

which, when acted upon, result in "disconnecting" us from Earth. Slater contrasts these "disconnector" concepts with "connector" ones such as cowardice, inconsistency, dependence, sensuality, and corruptibility—which, when acted upon (he claims), *connect* us to Earth.

I like the distinction that Slater makes (Veblen's is too much Economy-oriented), but would identify a different set of "connector" concepts: being passive, phlegmatic, un-ambitious—and ordinary, among other virtues. People having such characteristics might be characterized as lazy good-for-nothings in terms of the dominant value system; but perhaps it is that *system* that is deficient! If it is "progress" that we want, the dominant value system will do. But if it is *survival* that is our goal, it would seem that we should not value being hard-working, driven, creative, etc. For people with such characteristics are the ones responsible for us being in our current (rather dire) situation; and given this, it would be foolish for us to think that they can lead us away from the brink.

There is a stigma attached to being ordinary in our society. And those who *are* ordinary often have difficulty accepting themselves because of this fact: if others perceive one as being inferior, it is difficult for one to acquire and maintain a good self-image. Ostensibly, ordinary people are—virtually by definition—lacking in intelligence. But consider this possibility: IQ tests are geared to the nature of modern society, and will tend to yield the highest scores for those who are "tuned in" to modern society. If one is not so "tuned in"—which, I suspect, is the case with many "ordinary" people—one is unlikely to score well on such tests. What may characterize many "ordinary" people, rather, is that they are "programmed" for a way of life in accord with human "design specifications"—i.e., a way of life rather different from the one that prevails. They may be the sort of people with more of an innate urge for *passing* time than *spending* it (to use a distinction borrowed from an article ("The Gospel of Consumption") by Jeffrey Kaplan on the *Orion Magazine* web site http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/2962/). Such people may not be admired in our society—but should be, given that they bear little, if any, responsibility for our being in our current dire situation.

It is not surprising that ordinary people have little influence in our society, and also not surprising that they tend to have modest means. However, these are *unfortunate* facts because what they suggest is that our situation is *hopeless*: Those in the best position to "save" us lack both the motivation and means so to do—so that insofar as disaster occurs, they will suffer along with everyone else. Indeed, they may be the first to suffer! Where's the justice?!

Some Uses of Biology: Three Perspectives

Alton C. Thompson

The frequently-used term "human nature" is typically used:

- In conjunction with *behavior*;
- As an (if not *the*) *explanation* of behavior;
- With the behavior being referred to being of an *anti-social* nature.

These facts regarding the usage of "human nature" suggest several questions:

- Insofar as biology is used as an explanatory factor relative to human behavior, does "human nature" (i.e., biology) *just* account for anti-social behavior? (So that "bad" behavior has its basis in biological "drives," and "good" behavior is a result of conscious choice?
- Can human behavior be explained *just* on the basis of biology? (So that biology accounts for both "bad" and "good" behavior?)
- Can biology be used to explain human phenomena *other* than behavior?

The ensuing discussion can be thought of as addressing—if but indirectly—those three questions, with the conclusion of that discussion being that there *are* alternatives to "human nature philosophy." Indeed, the discussion concludes, implicitly, that the term "human nature" is a holdover from the days of pre-scientific modes of thought, and as such should be expunged from the language. Before proceeding with that discussion, however, I need to make a series of introductory comments.

Introductory Comments

If one thinks of human behavior as a *process*, one can identify a series of steps associated with a given behavior:

1. Perception—seeing, hearing, smelling, or touching something.
2. Reaction—which has two aspects (both of which are involuntary—and genetically-based):
    a. External—facial expression, gesture, and/or vocalization, a given manifestation being termed a certain "emotion."

b. Internal—physiological, hormonal, etc., changes occurring within the body, these often functioning to prepare the body for an *action*.

3. Action.

There are, of course, exceptions to this sequence:

1. A given perception may result in a reaction in some individuals, but not others. For example, the perception of a given vista may result in a feeling of *awe* in some but not in others.

2. Some reactions tend *not* to have an associated action. For example, a feeling of awe typically does not generate an (overt) action. Given, however, that some individuals are more sensitive and creative than others, some experiencing that feeling may compose a poem or a song, may develop religious ideas, may be motivated to initiate an organization (e.g., John Muir and the Sierra Club), etc.

Another point worth mentioning is that if one, in reacting to some perception, is near other individuals, those others (most, if not all) are usually able to "read" the emotion being expressed by the individual in question, may themselves experience that emotion ("contagion"), and then also be motivated to engage in the action "called for" by the emotion.

My discussion so far has been ignoring an important distinction, however—that of behavior as it occurred/occurs with pre-"civilized" peoples vs. behavior as it occurs in "civilized" societies (i.e., those societies that post-date the Agricultural Revolution of 10,000 years ago, and are "products" of that Revolution).

It would appear that the actions of pre-civilized peoples consisted/consist primarily of those that were/are responses to reactions, or were rooted in biological "drives." The case of "civilized" peoples is slightly different, however, in that:

1. Some actions parallel those that occur in pre-civilized societies in that they occur in response to involuntary reactions and "drives."

2. Some reactions that were/are followed by actions in pre-civilized societies fail to produce the expected action in a civilized society—because they are suppressed, if but unconsciously. If such suppression becomes routine, a psychosomatic disorder is likely to develop.[20]

[20] See, e.g., the old, but still valuable, A. T. W. Simeons, *Man's Presumptuous Brain: An Evolutionary Interpretation of Psychosomatic Disease.* New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1960.

3. Many of the actions that occur do so independently of reactions, occurring (see, e.g., my "Obstacles to the Good Society " http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/04/obstacles-to-the-good-society/):

    a. In response to a situation that one finds oneself in.

    b. In response to a belief system that "possesses" one.

    c. As a matter of free choice.

Note that to this point my discussion has:

1. Made no reference to "human nature."
2. Been non-normative in nature: It has refrained from using the terms "good" and "bad," and has not even *suggested* such terms.

In "lacking" these two features, my discussion to this point has, then, been "deviant," for discussions of (allegedly) genetically-based behaviors typically not only make use of the term "human nature," but apply a value judgment ("good" or—more commonly—"bad") to the behavior(s) attributed to genes. The question raised here, however, is whether, in discussing human behavior, it is useful—or even meaningful—to invoke the concept of "human nature," and I address that question (and the ones posed at the beginning) by discussing:

- Ideas expressed by Thomas Henry Huxley [1825 – 1895] on the matter.
- My ideas.
- Ideas expressed by Dacher Keltner in his recent *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*.[21]

What prompts my discussion of Huxley's ideas are the claims, made, e.g., by primatologist Frans de Waal,[22] that (a) there is such a thing as "veneer theory" and (b) this "theory" has its basis in the writings of Huxley. As both of these claims can be questioned, I first question de Waal's claim that "veneer theory" is the name for something that actually exists; then, after discussing Huxley's ideas—one's that pertain in particular to human behavior—I will question a part (what, indeed, I regard as the *key* part) of the "veneer theory" claim leveled against Huxley.

[21] New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009

[22] Stephen Macedo and Josiah Ober, editors, *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009. The book consists of an essay by de Waal, followed by commentaries by Robert Wright, Christine M. Korsgaard, Philip Kitcher, , and Peter Singer. The book concludes with de Waal's response to these commentaries.

First, though, let me quote the relevant passage by de Waal, appearing (p. 7) under the heading "VENEER THEORY":

> In 1893, for a large audience in Oxford, England, Huxley publicly reconciled his dim view of the natural world with the kindness occasionally encountered in human society. Huxley realized that the laws of the physical world are unalterable. He felt, however, that their impact on human existence could be softened and modified if people kept nature under control. Thus, Huxley compared humanity with a gardener who has a hard time keeping weeds out of his garden. He saw human ethics as a victory over an unruly and nasty evolutionary process (Huxley, 1989 [1894]).

De Waal is referring here to a 1989 edition of Huxley's *Evolution and Ethics*, published by Princeton University Press. (I provide a link to an 1899 edition of this book below.) Below I list the three essays in this book that I will be referring to here, and I should note that the 1894 essay that de Waal refers to above is *not* the 1893 Romanes lecture. The 1894 essay (which de Waal references) contains a gardening reference, but the 1893 Romanes lecture does not (despite de Waal's claim that it does).

As to the matter of whether "veneer theory" should be thought of as having a referent, let us first recognize that in science the *function* of a theory is to explain, and that it does so through deductive reasoning. *What* a theory explains is a *law* (i.e., a universal statement with firm empirical support), which in this explanatory context is referred to as an *explanandum*. A theory itself is a set of statements believed to be "true" (i.e., having empirical support), but without the requirement that all of those statements have firm empirical support—some being, perhaps, of a speculative nature. The theory itself is referred to as the *explanans*.[23] How does a theory explain? By "producing" the *explanandum*. That is, if a given *explanandum* is deducible from the statements constituting the theory, the theory is said to have "explained" the *explanandum.* An additional point of importance here is that more than one theory may be proposed for a given *explanandum*, with there being no sound basis for selecting one theory over the others. In fact, several theories may be generally accepted simultaneously, under the belief that in a certain context one theory is appropriate, in another context another theory is appropriate.

In the case of "veneer theory," the first question that arises is: What is the *explanandum* (i.e., what is it that it purported explains), and what is the explanation (i.e., *explanans*) offered? I would answer the first part of this question by stating that the *explanandum* is the "law" that all of those creatures warranting the label "human" are, and have been, "anti-social"—by which it is meant (I assume) that humans are "selfish" (i.e., humans never do, and have never done, anything for other humans), "aggressive" (i.e., humans, in interacting with other humans, always do, and have done, so in a manner that is hurtful to those others), and . . .(?).

As to the second part of the question, the explanation offered by "veneer theory" is that humans exhibit anti-social behavior because they are "programmed" so to do; i.e., their genes dictate that their interactions with other humans be characterized as anti-social. Not just *some* times, but *always*.

[23] It should be noted that the terms "*explanandum*" and "*explanans*" are used with *all* explanations, not just with theories.

What is the scientific status of this "theory"? Its basic problem is that it is an explanation offered for a non-law: It is simply not true that all interactional behavior by humans relative to other humans is, and has been, of an anti-social nature. Indeed, not only is this *not* a law; it is not possible that it *could* be a law: The human is helpless at birth, and without care, will die; the only reason that humans exist as a species at present is that they all received some care after being born—with some receiving "better" care than others, of course. It is conceivable that humans, upon being born, would receive care from members of some other species rather than humans. But if this were to occur, the result would be a "feral" being—one not recognizably human. Which fact points to the fact that what a given human "becomes" is only in part a function of genetic inheritance, with how that individual is *raised* (among other factors) also being decisive.

We can now conclude that because the *explanandum* associated with "veneer theory" lacks an empirical basis, any explanation offered for it is simply pointless—about as pointless as a "theory" that explains why unicorns eat only fescue grass. Let us, then, expunge the useless term "veneer theory" from our language.

Next, then, let us examine some of the ideas expressed by Thomas Huxley, relative to human behavior, in the latter part of the nineteenth century—with my earlier discussion of behavior above providing the benchmark for the discussion. Let me warn the reader in advance that I take my task here seriously, so that my discussion of Huxley is rather lengthy.

Thomas H. Huxley

I will be referring specifically to three of Huxley's essays, all appearing in his *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* http://books.google.com/books?id=HH1NBHWcPu8C&printsec=frontcover&dq=evolution+and+ethics+huxley&hl=en&ei=7GOvTY_yF4fMgQfpsfmSDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CDIQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q&f=false . [24] The essays are as follows:

- "Evolution and Ethics. Prolegomena," 1894, pp. 1 - 45. (Evidently this was written specifically for this book.)
- "Evolution and Ethics," 1893, pp. 46 – 116. (This was delivered as the second Romanes http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Romanes lecture, in 1893.)
- "The Struggle for Existence in Human Society," 1888, pp. 195 - 236. (This was originally published in the February 1888 issue of *The Nineteenth Century*, an important journal of the time.)[25]

[24] New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899.

[25] Prince Peter Kropotkin (who was a geographer and anarchist besides being a prince) took issue with this article, and between September 1890 and June 1896 published a series of "rebuttal" articles in *The Nineteenth Century*. These articles were collected together into a book—*Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* http://dwardmac.pitzer.edu/Anarchist_Archives/kropotkin/mutaidcontents.html —published in 1902. Kropotkin was the kind of a person that I would have loved to have as a neighbor!

I have indicated the page numbers where these essays appear in *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* because my references below are to page numbers rather than to essays.

As my interest here, in part, is in "human nature," and Frans de Waal (among others) has seemingly suggested that Huxley regarded human nature as "nasty," two questions arise here for consideration:

- Did the concept of "human nature" play a role in Huxley's thinking?
- If so, what was Huxley's concept of "human nature"?

In addressing these questions, the first point that I would make is that I have found the term "human nature" used but once in these three essays. On p. 209 he stated: "Whether human nature is competent, under any circumstances, to reach, or even seriously advance towards, this ideal condition [that he had been discussing, beginning on p. 206], is a question which need not be discussed [for the simple reason that it will never be reached]." (In the same paragraph he made reference to "natural man"—by which I assume that he meant humans behaving according to the dictates of "human nature," i.e., humans living in a pre-civilized state.)

The meaning that Huxley attached to "human nature," not clarified on p. 209, must be gleaned from other statements he made in these three essays. But although the *factor* that gave rise to the development of "human nature" was discussed with consistency in these three essays, the *content* of that "nature" was not—as we shall see shortly. Thus, to assert that Huxley held a negative view of "human nature," is to distort what Huxley actually stated relative to the matter.

Beginning on p. 9, Huxley (in the process of discussing gardening, and the "horticultural process") distinguished between a "state of nature" and a "state of Art" (or "artifice," as he put in on p. 11), and argued that a "cosmic process" produced the content of nature, whereas "artificial" things were the product of human action. However, Huxley argued that (p. 11) "man, physical, intellectual, and moral, is as much a part of nature, as purely a product of the cosmic process, as the humblest weed." There is, though, a key difference between the "cosmic process" and the horticultural one; for (p. 13): "The tendency of the cosmic process is to bring about the adjustment of the forms of plant life to the current conditions; the tendency of the horticultural process is the adjustment of the conditions to the needs of the forms of plant life which the gardener desires to raise." In short, in nature, *environmental conditions* dictate what plants will be found in a given area; with humans, however, *people* decide what plants they want to raise, and then create the environmental conditions necessary for their successful raising.

Where "human nature"—the concept, if not the term—entered Huxley's thinking was in his explanation of the factor that gave rise to "human nature." On pp. 13 – 14 he stated: "The cosmic process uses unrestricted multiplication as the means whereby hundreds compete for the place and nourishment adequate for one; it employs frost and drought to cut off the weak and unfortunate; to survive . . . ." On p. 81 he stated: "Men in society are undoubtedly subject to the cosmic process. As among other animals, multiplication goes on without cessation, and involves severe competition for the means of support." And on p. 205: "One of the most essential conditions, if not the chief cause, of the struggle for existence, is the tendency to multiply without limit, which man shares with all living things."

Huxley had, of course, borrowed the notion of "multiplication" from Charles Darwin's [1809 – 1882] *The Origin of Species* http://books.google.com/books?id=YY4EAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA18&dq=origin+of+species+1859&hl=en#v=onepage&q=origin%20of%20species%201859&f=false (1859)—Darwin, in turn, having borrowed it from Thomas Malthus http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thomas_Robert_Malthus [1766 – 1834]—who had argued, famously, that: "The power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in the earth to produce subsistence for man.". (That is, populations—regardless of species—tend to grow at a faster rate than the food supply that they depend upon for sustenance.) Darwin had inferred from this (supposed) "law" stated by Malthus that the inexorable result would be (intra-specific) competition, with the "winners" in this competition having innate characteristics that differentiated them from the "losers"—so that as the "winners" produced progeny, and the "winners" among *their* progeny produced progeny . . ., over time the species would change in a slow, steady, progressive manner (in terms of the "success" variable(s), and any other variable(s) that happened to be correlated with it, added Darwin). (By implication, as the species changed, it would retain its "fitness" relative to the environment, but the interpretation of what "fitness" means has continued to be a matter of confusion; see my "Obstacles to the Good Society.")

Huxley not only borrowed the notion of "multiplication" from Darwin, but borrowed Darwin's inference from that "law" that "multiplication" would, of necessity, result in (intra-specific) competition. In his discussion (p. 196 ff.) of deer being prey of wolves, he evinced knowledge of the fact of predation, with its tendency to keep the prey species (singular and plural) in check. But for some reason Huxley (like Darwin, who also recognized the existence of predation) insisted on giving only competition (with conspecifics) a role in maintaining a given population at a "carrying capacity" level.

What "human nature" results did Huxley associate with the intra-specific competition that, he insisted, was a part of the "cosmic process"? He provided no consistent answer to this question, as I will now demonstrate:

- Although Huxley's discussion on p. 14 refers specifically to a garden (which explains his reference to frost and drought), his assertion that "to survive, there is need not only of strength, but of flexibility and of good fortune" can be understood as a *general* statement intended to any species. Insofar as that is a correct interpretation of this passage, so that we can think of it as applicable to humans, the statement "says" that those humans who survive in the competition that necessarily results from "multiplication" will have (a) strength, (b) flexibility, and (c) good luck. Note that with none of these "success" variables do we have a basis for labeling them as of an "anti-social" nature!

- On p. 27 Huxley stated that "with all [of] their enormous differences in natural endowment, men agree in one thing, and that is their innate desire to enjoy the pleasures [of life] and to escape the pains of life; and, in short, to do nothing but that which pleases them to do, without the least reference to the welfare of the society into which they are born." Thus, in this passage Huxley asserted that every human—whether they become "winners" or "losers" in competition that they must endure—have an "innate" tendency

to behave in a manner that will add to their pleasure and prevent them from experiencing pain. Huxley added that they will do so without considering the "welfare of the society," seemingly suggesting thereby that the exercise of these tendencies would result in anti-social behaviors. But the "pursuit of happiness" (to borrow a phrase from Thomas Jefferson) *need* not result in anti-social behavior; indeed, modern research (as will be evidenced in my discussion below of Dacher Keltner) has concluded that we humans are "programmed" in such a way that "doing" for others not only results in an increase in the well-being of the helpee, but in one's own sense of well-being as well. Indeed, some (e.g., the Dalai Lama) would go so far as to assert:

> If you want to be happy, practice compassion;
>
> if you want others to be happy, practice compassion.[26]

That is, practicing compassion is a "win-win" sort of behavior!

- In the same paragraph on p. 27 Huxley stated, immediately below the statement just quoted above: "That is their inheritance (the reality at the bottom of the doctrine of original sin) from the long series of ancestors, human and semi-human and brutal, in whom the strength of this innate tendency to self-assertion was the condition of victory in the struggle for existence." Thus, in this sentence Huxley asserted (or at least implied) that the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain—motivated, as it was, by an "innate tendency to self-assertion"—would, *of necessity*, be of an anti-social nature. It is evident, then, that Huxley believed that the exercise of "self-assertion" would necessarily result in anti-social behavior, but he provided no convincing argument in favor of that assertion. Therefore, we have no definitive basis here for concluding that an innate tendency to pursue pleasure and avoid pain would *necessarily* result in anti-social behavior. Huxley *claimed*, in this passage, that it would, but we are not obligated to *accept* Huxley's conclusion.

- On p. 28 Huxley referred to "the mutual affection of parent and offspring, intensified by the long infancy of the human species." Here Huxley seemed to say that humans, as parents (and whether or not they became "winners" or "losers") had an innate tendency to have "affection" for their offspring, and that offspring had an innate tendency to have "affection" for their parents. And he added that the fact that the human infant required a long period of parental care "intensified" these tendencies, for both parent and offspring. The implication here is that although those who "win" in the competition that necessarily occurs with conspecifics may have some anti-social instincts ("self-assertion"), they also have an instinct which "drives" them to care for their offspring—a "drive" that is

[26] Quoted in Dacher Keltner, *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009, p. 249.

intensified the longer that care continues. What we seem to have in this passage, then, is an "admission" that "human nature" has both positive and negative elements.

- Huxley followed the above-quoted statement by asserting (p. 28): "But the most important is the tendency, so strongly developed in man, to reproduce in himself actions and feelings similar to, or correlated with, those of other men. Man is the most consummate of all mimics in the animal world; none but himself can draw or model; none comes near him in the scope, variety, and exactness of vocal imitation; none is such a master of gesture; while he seems to be impelled thus to imitate for the pure pleasure of it. And there is no such another emotional chameleon."

  What he seemed to be saying here is that all humans—whether they become "winners" or "losers"—are born with an ability not only to "read" the emotions of others, but to "mirror" them—i.e., to feel the same emotion as was being felt by the individual being observed. Oddly, however, his statement that individuals do this for the "pure pleasure of it" suggests that this behavioral tendency is a *chosen* one, rather than one that is innate and involuntary. Perhaps Huxley intended to say here that when individuals react, spontaneously, to the emotion being expressed by another individual, they feel pleasure. But if this was Huxley's intent, the question arises: If observing another display happiness makes one also feel happy, why would observing another display, e.g., anger, *also* make one feel happy?

  It appears to me that muddled thinking was involved in Huxley's comments here. It appears that Huxley was again saying, of "human nature," that it involved both positive and negative aspects, but the precise meaning that he intended in this particular passage certainly lacks in clarity.

- On p. 29 Huxley stated that "the greatest restrainer of the anti-social tendencies of men is fear, not of the law, but of the opinion of their fellows." Here Huxley seemed to be asserting that although the survivors of the competition that occurred would have an innate tendency to engage in anti-social behaviors, those living in society would learn to restrain those tendencies. Such a conclusion is plausible, but it leads us to ask: If humans have an innate tendency to behave in an anti-social manner, how does one explain the facts that they have, nonetheless, (a) created societies and (b) then maintained them?! Huxley took as a "given" the fact that humans live in societies, but didn't seem to recognize that his reasoning about humans presented difficulties in explaining why human societies came into being in the first place! Indeed, this was a major deficiency in his thinking.

  Huxley knew that self-restraint was necessary for life in society, and that this could be *learned* (for it was not inherent in "human nature"); but these three essays provide no evidence that he ever grappled successfully with the problem of explaining why and how human societies came into existence. On p. 24 he noted that "Social organization is not peculiar to men," and then proceeded to discuss ants and bees. How did he explain the

origin of *their* societies? "Now this society [i.e., that of bees] is the direct product of an organic necessity, impelling every member of it to a course of action which tends to the good of the whole." In other words, they created societies because they *had* to!—a "non-explanation "explanation," if ever there was one! He then went on to declare (p. 26): "I see no reason to doubt that, at its origin, human society was as much a product of organic necessity as that of bees"—which statement he then footnoted: *Collected Essays*, vol v., Prologue, pp. 50 – 54. (I have not read the cited pages because I have not been able to convince myself that they would enlighten me on the matter.)

Note that the passage on p. 29 makes no explicit reference to "human nature," but suggests that (what we would call) "human nature" contains anti-social tendencies, but also contains an innate ability to *learn* to behave in a manner contrary to one's inherited anti-social tendencies. Indeed, in a famous passage Huxley stated (p. 83): "Let us understand, once for all, that the ethical progress of society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it." So that "human nature" is somewhat of a "mixed bag" in that one has inherited tendencies both to behave in an anti-social manner and to learn to behave otherwise! It seems clear that Huxley was gifted as an intellectual contortionist!

- On p. 51 Huxley "admitted" that "the consummation [with humans] is not reached in man, the mere animal; nor in man, the whole or half savage; but only in man, the member of an organized polity." Thus, humans not only *had* (what we would call) the "genetic material" to escape the degraded existence of the "'whole or half savage," but *acted on* that "genetic material"—which fact Huxley judged to be "good." Then, in referring to the "savage state" that had existed earlier (pp. 51 – 52), he stated: "For his successful progress, throughout the savage state, man has been largely indebted to those qualities which he shares with the ape and the tiger; his exceptional physical organization; his cunning, his sociability, his curiosity, and his imitativeness; his ruthless and ferocious destructiveness when his anger is roused in opposition."

  Note here that the "qualities" that Huxley identified were a "mixed bag" of positive and negative innate tendencies. Huxley implied that although these tendencies were all dominant (if working in different directions) during the "savage" stage of human existence, we moderns still have these tendencies: We have inherited an ability for self-restraint, and are using that ability to suppress the "negative" aspects of our "human nature." Thus, Huxley's "message" in this passage was that although "human nature" is a "mixed bag," an important part of that "nature" is an inherited ability to suppress our "negative" tendencies, and even *choose* to behave in a positive manner relative to our fellows. Indeed, Huxley stated (p. 205) that "society not only has a moral end, but in its perfection, social life, is embodied morality."

- Also on p. 51 Huxley stated that: "Man, the animal, . . . has worked his way to the headship of the sentient world, and has become the superb animal which he is, in virtue of his success in the struggle for existence. The conditions having been of a certain order, man's organization has adjusted itself to them better than that of his competitors in

the cosmic strife. In the case of mankind, the self-assertion, the unscrupulous seizing upon all that can be grasped, the tenacious holding of all that can be kept, which constitute the essence of the struggle for existence, have answered." In this passage Huxley seems to have suggested that humans were "naturally" aggressive, unscrupulous, and selfish—i.e., had only negative innate traits. Conclusions that not only conflict with his conclusions stated elsewhere (as we have seen above), but conclusions that suggest that humans are unable, on the basis of their genetic inheritance, to create societies!

- On p. 52 asserted that "in proportion as men have passed from anarchy to social organization, and in proportion as civilization has grown in worth, these deeply ingrained serviceable qualities [referred to above] have become defects." If, that is, we now assume that "human nature" is negative, but that humans, by some unknown magic, have nevertheless been able to form societies, we must recognize that our inherited traits present difficulties for civilized existence. My reaction: If Huxley's premises are true, his conclusion logically follows; but Huxley had a habit of changing his premises, and although some of those premises might have empirical support, other premises do not.

  On p. 26 Huxley wrote that "it is easy to see that every increase in the duration of family ties, with the resulting co-operation of larger and larger number of descendants for protection and defence, would give the families in which such modifications took place a distinct advantage over the others." This seems to suggest that Huxley believed that societies came into existence through the expansion of families: As families (in a broad sense) expanded in size, cooperation within the family also became more prevalent (that behavior being used primarily to provide the group with protection), so that as such families grew in size, they gave their members "survival value" (what appears here to be a "group selection" argument). But Huxley did not clearly offer such an argument; and if one believes, though, that he did, and adds that Huxley thought of "human nature" as containing both positive and negative elements, one has a plausible argument. But such an argument only makes sense if one asserts that "human nature" has both "good" and "bad" characteristics.

- On p. 81 Huxley stated: "Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those happen to be the fittest, in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but of those who are ethically the best." However, in another place Huxley seemingly contradicted—or at least qualified—this conclusion. On p. 31 he stated: "It is . . . to be observed that, just as the self-assertion, necessary to the maintenance of society against the state of nature, will destroy that society if it is allowed free operation within; so the self-restraint, the essence of the ethical process, which is no less an essential condition of the existence of every polity, may, by excess, become ruinous to it." In developing this statement he made some interesting comments (p. 32) on the Golden Rule: "Strictly observed, the 'golden rule' involves the negation of law by the refusal to put in motion against law-breakers; and, as regards the external

relations of a polity, it is the refusal to continue the struggle for existence. It can be obeyed, even partially, only under the protection of a society which repudiates it. Without such shelter, the followers of the 'golden rule' may indulge the hopes of heaven, but they must reckon with the certainty that other people will be masters of the earth." Thus, although the Golden Rule is a good rule, the sensible person will realize that it is foolish to carry the Rule to an extreme.

Huxley's discussion on p. 81 made no discussion, true, of "human nature"—except in suggesting that we have an innate ability to make decisions, and that in exercising that ability it is not inevitable that we will make decisions that, from a broad perspective, are wise.

- On p. 200 Huxley stated that the "animal world is on about the same level as a gladiator's show. The creatures are fairly well treated, and set to fight—whereby the strongest, the swiftest, and the cunningest live to fight another day." And given that man is also an animal, the suggestion here is that the factors that determine "success" in the "struggle for existence" are the three listed. Note here first that the view of "human nature" implicit in this statement is not necessarily negative: For example, if the "strong" survive, an interpretation can be given to that conclusion that the strong who survive also have an innate generosity—so that the survivors consist of the strong and the not-so-strong.

  Another point that needs to be made regarding the competition that Huxley thought occurred in nature is that the "multiplication" that, for Huxley (as for Darwin), was the cause of this competition, had created a situation which *forced* individuals to become competitive. That is, the competitive behavior that occurred may not have occurred in response to the *internal* factor of a negative "human nature" but, rather, to the *situational* factor of "multiplication." This is a possibility not considered by either Darwin or Huxley, so "possessed" were they both by the notion that internal innate factors "had" to be the cause of the competitive behavior. It would, of course, be reasonable to argue that even if innate tendencies were not "originally" the cause of the competitive behavior, they would become so as a *result* of that behavior: Those individuals having a "competitive nature" would, *ceteris paribus*, have a greater chance of "succeeding" (i.e., surviving, and then having progeny) than those lacking such a "nature." My point, however, is that although such an argument has merit, it is not one that either Darwin or Huxley ever made, so far as I have been able to determine.

What answers should I give to the two questions I posed at the beginning of this section regarding Thomas Huxley? They can be answered very briefly:

- The concept of "human nature" *did* play a role in Huxley's thinking.

- It is erroneous to make the "blanket" statement that Huxley had a negative view of "human nature." Rather, Huxley made a *variety* of statements relative to the matter—at

times making claims that were of a positive (or at least non-negative) nature, at times of a more-or-less negative matter, and still other times of a "mixed bag" nature.

In terms of my initial ":process" discussion, it can be noted that Huxley's primary orientation was to actions rather than reactions—actions that either had a basis in biological inheritance, or in conscious decision-making. I quoted some of his comments on reactions, including his assertion (p. 28) that the human's ability to react to the emotional displays of others was highly important. But if he actually believed this, why didn't he *develop* it more than he did?

Huxley noted (p. 38) that although societies had developed over time, there had not been a corresponding development in "the physical, or the mental, characters" of humans—and Huxley did not see that growing "deviation" as a problem. Likely he would not have agree with René Dubos's 1968 statement that "In many respects, modern man is like a wild animal spending its life in a zoo; like the animal, he is fed abundantly and protected from inclemencies but deprived of the natural stimuli essential for many functions of his body and his mind."[27] Evidently Huxley was so "possessed" by the notion that historical development is basically the story of continual "progress" that he was simply unable to consider the possibility that the "deviation" just referred to presented problems for humans—a point developed by, e.g., Noet T. Boaz in his *Evolving Health: The Origins of Illness and How the Modern World is Making Us Sick*.[28]

A final point that I would like to make here is that although Huxley ("Darwin's Bulldog") was clearly familiar with Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859), these three essays provide one with no evidence that he had any familiarity with Darwin's *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871) or *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). Darwin's *Origin* had not (except by implication) dealt with humans, but *Descent* and *Expression* had, and indicate that Darwin had developed his thinking beyond what he had written in *Origin*. Huxley, however, seems to have gotten "stuck" on the Darwin of 1859 (insofar as his ideas were in agreement with those of Darwin).

<u>*My* Views Involving Biology</u> (stated very briefly!)

A tacit assumption underlying Huxley's discussion of human behavior is that "natural selection" is a "law of nature," applying equally to all species, and that the selection associated with "natural selection" (a) occurs on the basis of an innate trait or traits—one(s) that gives one "success" in one's competition with conspecifics, and (b) results in slow, steady, progressive change in the given species—while (a notion implicit here) the species maintains "fitness" relative to the environment it occupies.[29]

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[27] *So Human An Animal*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968, p., 16.

[28] New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002.

[29] I am, of course, referring specifically to "natural selection" as conceived by Darwin (especially how he "defined" it in the first paragraph of Chapter IV of *The Origin of Species*. Nowadays "natural selection" is often thought of as a process involving changes in gene frequencies in a population; a definition that, because (unlike Darwin's) it makes no reference to a mechanism(s) that *causes* these changes, borders on the vacuous.

My starting assumption, in contrast, is that (Darwinian) "natural selection" played no role whatsoever in human evolution, and that the relevant factors, rather, were (a) environmental change, (b) predation, and (c) (female-choice) sexual selection—none of which factors necessarily involves intra-specific competition. Although the first factor seems mainly to have played a role in our *physical* development, the latter two "mechanisms" evidently had an impact not only on our physical development, but our behavioral development (in terms of innate behavioral proclivities) as well. The latter has involved both reactions (with consequent actions) *and* actions (to allude here to my "process" discussion at the beginning of this essay), but my interest has been especially in the latter (with Dacher Keltner—discussed next—having an interest in reactions primarily).

As I noted earlier (in an endnote), Prince Peter Kropotkin [1842 – 1921] reacted negatively to Huxley's 1888 article ("The Struggle for Existence in Human Society") in *The Nineteenth Century*, because his own research in Siberia and his reading had led him to believe that *cooperation*, not competition, was the "law of nature." Unfortunately, Kropotkin did not offer an explanation (i.e., a "mechanism"[30] comparable to Darwin's "natural selection") for why cooperation is common in nature, and this "hole" in Kropotkin's thinking may help explain why his observations and thoughts have been largely ignored over the years.

Research during the past few years, however, makes it clear that both predation and (female-choice) sexual selection have been the decisive factors in human evolution, and that both of these "mechanisms" have "operated" to give us (a) (involuntary) reactions that conduce "social" behaviors, and (b) actions (with a genetic basis) that do the same—those actions including caretaking activities that are essential for activating the potentialities latent in the genes.

This is not the place to detail the specific mechanisms associated with these factors (mechanisms that are not well known anyway!), but as I suggested earlier, I think it important to distinguish between human behavior as it occurred before the "Fall" into agriculture (with the Agricultural Revolution, and consequent rise of "civilization") and behavior since that time. I suggested earlier the possibility that reactions, and actions motivated by reactions (along with "drives"), were characteristic of the pre-Fall period; and that since then, although we still have the same reactions that we had in pre-Fall times, the factors that explain *actions* are far more complex today—and some reactions that "should" result in actions, don't (often thereby resulting in psychosomatic disorders).

What interests me especially is the fact that as our ways of life have changed ("advanced," we are convinced), our biology has changed but little (a point recognized by Huxley). Prior to the "Fall" into agriculture, there had occurred a co-development of humans as biological entities and the way of life then existing. The gatherer-hunter way of life "directed," in a sense, biological development; but, conversely, as biological development occurred (and especially as intelligence increased, and an ability to communicate developed), modifications occurred ("improvements") in the gatherer-hunter way of life. Despite these facts, however, a basic consonance existed—

[30] The subtitle of Kropotkin's book ("A Factor of Evolution") suggests that he thought of cooperation as a *causative factor* analogous to Darwin's "natural selection." However, the *content* of the book provides no evidence in support of that suggestion.

and continued—between way of life and biology: the way of life "fit" the biology, and the biology "fit" the way of life.

At some point the growth in human intelligence led to developments in technology that enabled a sedentary way of life; and although the change from a "migratory" way of life to a sedentary one did not occur "overnight," this change in the *nature* of the way of life had profound consequences.[31] The change meant that individuals were now exposed to stimuli for which their bodies were not "designed," and were unable to be exposed to those stimuli for which they *were* "designed." It meant that individuals were now required to engage in behaviors for which their bodies were not "designed;" and were now unable to engage in behavior for which they *were* "designed." It meant that individuals were now forced to use their brains in ways contrary to the brain's "design," and also were *not* able to use them in ways consistent *with* the brain's "design." Etc.

This "discrepancy" between the way of life for which we had become "designed" and the ways of life that we have been forced to live has been growing over time—at an accelerating rate since the Industrial Revolution (i.e., since about 1750 CE). And likely, this growing Discrepancy is the root cause of many—perhaps most—of the problems that we face today as humans: Given, however, that this matter has not been researched with any degree of thoroughness, one cannot be definitive about this.

Given that our way of life is "out of sync" with our biology, it should be clear that there are two possible solutions:

- Modify our ways of life in the direction of our "design specifications"—at least to the point where whatever degree of Discrepancy exists is not a serious problem for us.

- Modify our biology in the direction of the requirements of our ways of life.

Needless to say, neither course of action would be easy to take—with the second one having the additional problem of raising ethical issues. Given that we may near the threshold of "runaway" (so far as "global warming" is concerned)—assuming that we haven't already passed it—the most likely course that we humans will take is . . . one of relative *inaction*! So that (as scientist James Lovelock has stated) the likelihood of our species going the way of the dinosaurs is very high indeed. Too bad!

Dacher Keltner

Psychologist (at the University of California, Berkeley) Dacher Keltner recently published a book—*Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*[32]—that is of great importance. In it he reports research done by himself, his students (often in conjunction with himself), and others,

[31] See, e.g., Philip E. L. Smith, Food Production and Its Consequences. Menlo Park, CA: Cummings Publishing Company, 1976; and Jared Diamond, "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race, http://www.scribd.com/doc/2100251/Jared-Diamond-The-Worst-Mistake-in-the-History-of-the-Human-Race " 1987.

[32] New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009.

and asserts that (p. ix) "emotion is the source of the meaningful life." The book addresses three questions (pp. ix, x):

- "How can we be happy?"
- "What are the deep origins of our capacity for kindness?"
- "How can we be good?"

Keltner's second question suggests that he will give an evolutionary account of our "capacity for kindness," but the fact of the matter is that Keltner's orientation is to empirical studies rather than speculation regarding the evolutionary mechanisms that have "given" us "kindness genes."

It is of interest that Keltner's first and third questions are answered by him—using empirical findings as his basis—by arguing that if we are good, we will be happy, and that being good is not that difficult given that we are "programmed" to be good. He quotes the Dalai Lama (p. 249) thusly:

> If you want to be happy, practice compassion;
>
> if you want others to be happy, practice compassion.

Despite the fact that this is an important book that warrants a detailed analysis, I will limit myself here to just two comments. First, although the book reports the results of a large number of empirical studies, it does so using a "self-help" perspective. Thus, the possibility that our problems are rooted in The Discrepancy, and will only be solved by either societal system change or drastic biological change is never considered.

Second, in terms of my "process" discussion at the beginning of this essay, it must be noted that Keltner's orientation is more to reactions (and the actions that result from them) than to actions. Thus, he has chapters on embarrassment, the smile, laughter, compassion, and awe; and although he also has chapters on teasing, touch, and love, the actions associated with teasing and touching are closely related to reactions; and love is a complex emotion, with associated actions—and Keltner's discussion of love is not particularly satisfying anyway. My main point here, however, is that there are many behaviors beyond the ones discussed by Keltner (see, e.g., my "Obstacles to the Good Society"), many of which are obstacles to the "good" that we were "born to be," but those behaviors play no role in Keltner's thinking. In other words, there is an important "hole" in his thinking, seemingly reflective of the fact that his orientation is to empirical research.

In minimizing here my discussion of Keltner, I do not mean to imply that I lack admiration for his book. Rather, I justify the shortness of my discussion here on the basis that I go into much more detail in another essay. Thus, if one wants additional information about the book (without reading it!), I recommend that other essay.

Conclusions

Darwin developed—invented, rather than discovered!—the concept of "natural selection," believing (one would assume[33]) that it explained species change—just as breeding (i.e., "artificial selection") is known to result in those changes in a species desired by the breeder. It turns out that the competition assumed by the concept[34] is of minor importance as a causative factor, but it has been difficult to come to that realization. Why? If one is convinced that "natural selection" explains (monotypic) evolution, if one is faced with a situation that demands an explanation, one will (glibly) offer "natural selection" as the explanation—and, indeed, the evolutionary literature is filled with glib "explanations." That is, rather than *searching* for an explanation, one will *assume* that one knows the answer in advance—so that one need not undertake any search. The result is that research into causes is inhibited, and research advance is retarded. It's true that Darwin's thinking "evolved" after the publication of his *The Origin of Species* in 1859; I am not aware, however, that he ever renounced a belief in the false doctrine (for *human* evolution, at any rate) of "natural selection."[35]

Beyond this intellectual problem, however, there has been the problem that the dogma that competition is a "law of nature" has been used—in the form of Social Darwinism—as a "scientific" basis for excusing anti-social behaviors. If one is told that we humans are "naturally" competitive, one may be tempted to "use" this "fact" to rationalize behaviors that one knows to be anti-social—and be able to do so in good conscience. And this has been done, presumably. Therefore, acceptance of the "fact" that "natural selection" is a law of nature has had negative consequences.

A parallel can be drawn between "natural selection" and "human nature" in that both concepts have inhibited research, and both concepts have been used to justify anti-social behavior. As I suggested at the beginning, the concept of "human nature" is a pre-scientific one that no longer has value (if it ever did!), and therefore should be consigned to the dust bin of history.

The concept of "human nature" seemingly has an orientation to actions rather than reactions, and suggests that actions having a basis in "human nature" are of an anti-social nature. The concept does not hold that *all* actions are rooted in "human nature," but seemingly suggests that those actions *not* having their basis in "human nature" are matters of conscious *choice*. The *facts* regarding human behavior, however, are rather different: Although involuntary reactions have their basis in biology, and some behaviors are responses to reactions, most actions are in response to situations, or the result of "possession" by a belief system, with only some actions involving true "choice." "Human nature"—to repeat—is a concept with little or no value, except for excusing (i.e., "explaining away) anti-social behavior.

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[33] However, I have long suspected that Darwin knew that the concept of "natural selection" had little merit, and simply used it in an effort to become known as a great scientist. If he had an hesitation in using it, this hesitation would have been removed upon learning that Alfred Russel Wallace had invented the same concept: If two people arrived at the same invention at the same time, how could it possibly be wrong?!

[34] Note that although competition is associated with "natural selection," it is *not* associated with "artificial selection."

[35] Many still don't. Even those who may not agree with the concept continue to use the term "natural selection," giving it a meaning different than the one Darwin attached to the term.

To conclude the discussion here: As the discussion above indicates, references to biology, in discussing humans, can be varied in nature, and often contain deficiencies:

- Huxley's discussion focused on actions rather than reactions, failed to distinguish between pre-Fall and post-Fall existence, and utterly lacked in consistency from passage to passage.

- My discussion focused on actions rather than reactions, lacked in specificity in discussing actions (emphasizing, rather, the pre-Fall/post-Fall distinction), and focused solely on the consequences attendant upon The Discrepancy (but without providing any detail).

- Keltner's discussion focuses on reactions, the primary virtue of his presentation being that he provides an abundance of empirical evidence in support of his contention that we humans are "born to be good." By not distinguishing between pre- and post-Fall existence, however, Keltner provides us with no information regarding the nature of post-Fall existence that makes living in accord with this "design specification" difficult. Indeed, his "self help" orientation suggests that he is either unwilling or unable to understand those difficulties.

The need today is not only better to understand the "why" of human behavior, but to recognize that the thrust of human behaviors today is not only of a *negative*, but a *dangerous*, nature. It is negative in that our way of life is becoming increasingly "discrepant" relative to our "design specifications" as humans. And it is dangerous in that it has brought us to a situation where we are either very close to, or already in, "runaway," so far as "global warming" is concerned; meaning that our very continued existence as a species is in question.

It is often claimed that our species is the most intelligent species yet "produced" by evolution. Our actions to date provide little in the way of support to that claim, but "the game is not yet over." Let's see if we can score a touchdown, despite the fact that the odds don't seem to be in our favor!

March 15, 2011

Societal System Change: A Model

Alton C. Thompson

If one believes that there is a need at present for societal system change, it can be most helpful to begin with a clear concept of the nature of the *existing* societal system; and in so doing, I would recommend as particularly useful a *geographical* conception of the Existing Order.

In this case we would imagine that we are somewhere out in space, but above the Existing Order, and viewing that Order below. In doing so, we would want to convert the physical realities to be observed into abstract symbols, and in so doing, we would conceive that reality in terms of "nodes" and "lines." The nodes would be points representing places where various kinds of *activities* take place, and the lines—which would connect these nodes—would represent *movements* that would be occurring between nodes. Some of those movements would be of people, some of "goods"—i.e., material things (whose "goodness," by the way, would be under question!).

What we would have here, then, would be not a *static* situation being represented but, rather, a *dynamic* one—and *that* fact has great importance for us interested in bringing about societal system change. For implicit in the dynamics that we could observe would be the matter of *interdependence* of the nodes and lines. If a superhuman Being were suddenly to cause all *movements* to cease, this would result in all *activities* ceasing also: production activities would cease, selling would cease, Wall Street "screwing" would cease, etc. Indeed, as people ran out of food (that they had stored in their homes), they would die—so that within a matter of days, everyone would die, and human bodies would begin to rot where they lay.

If, rather, this superhuman Being were to cause all *activities* (associated with the nodes) to cease), there would be no reason for the movements that had been occurring, and they also would quickly cease. Again, the result—given that humans would be ceasing the activity of eating—would be deaths on a massive scale, to the point that within a short period of time everyone in the society would be dead, and rotting away.

How can the above "facts" be used by one desiring to bring about societal system change? In answering this question, let us begin (with our "thought experiment") by assuming for the entire country that half of the population moved to self-sufficient intentional communities established in rural parts of the country capable of food production.[36] Doing this would, of course, require that land be purchased, and that property taxes be paid subsequently (unless each declared itself a church, and therefore exempt from property taxes!). And the fact of a necessity to pay property taxes would require each community to have enough production for sale to enable it to meet its

[36] In terms of a distinction that goes at least back to Adam Smith [1723 – 1790]—that of "productive" vs. "non-productive" work—it goes without saying that those making the egress would involve only those in the "productive" group. I might add that later Thorstein Veblen [1857 – 1929] refined Smith's categories by introducing "industrial" and "pecuniary"—those categories containing the "message" that those engaged in "industrial" activities are productive, those in "pecuniary" occupations are, rather, parasites.

tax obligations. But assume that each community produces only as much as it needs for its sustenance, that its members needs are low (they practice "simple living"[37]), and that each community produces beyond its members' needs only insofar as sales are needed to pay local property taxes. A given community might establish some sort of "wage" system for its internal use, but no wages-salaries in the usual sense would be paid, obviating the need for the payment of income taxes to state governments or the national government. And sales taxes would not be paid because purchases from the Outside would not be made (or at least kept to a minimum).

The question at hand, then, is: Were this to occur, what would happen to (a) the (activities associated with the) nodes and (b) the movement patterns that had existed prior to this mass egress?

As to the nodes, and the activities associated with them, let us consider some of the major possibilities:

[37] Richard Gregg, *The Value of Voluntary Simplicity*; Duane Elgin, *Voluntary Simplicity*, etc. See also http://www.christiansimpleliving.org and www.simplyliving.org among other sites.

[A point that I would add now—January 24, 2012—is that *laissez-faire* "theory" also assumes, tacitly, that human production often results in the extraction of "raw materials" and fuels, and that the activities thereby involved—including especially the burning of fuels (fossil fuels in particular)—have no impact on life—human and otherwise. Such an assumption is, of course, gravely in error! Put another way, this "theory" fails to recognize the existence of *systems*, and thereby is based on an outdated science. It's true that the "theory" tacitly assumes a static condition, with no growth occurring. But even a static "theory" should recognize that resources are used, and given their finite supply can be exhausted—and that their use can result in pollution, which does in fact have effects!]

Dissecting Laissez-Faire "Theory"

Alton C. Thompson

David Korten's recent "Greed is Not a Virtue" suggests—as his subtitle implies—that "profit-centered market fundamentalism has become a national religion" in this country. He notes, however, that for "millennia humanity's most celebrated spiritual leaders have taught that society works best and we all enjoy our greatest joy and fulfillment when we share, cooperate, and are honest in our dealings with one another." And he could have added—but did not—that an abundance of research (experimental and other) done in recent years (by, e.g., Frans de Waal and Dacher Keltner) has provided scientific support for such teaching.

Despite the teachings of spiritual leaders over the centuries (and recent research in support of their teachings), during the "past few decades," Korten observes, "market fundamentalism" has risen to the fore—and virtually become our "national religion." Korten refers to "market fundamentalism" as a "faith," thereby suggesting that it is based more on wishful thinking than evidence—and he is correct in making such a suggestion. But although Korten provides us with a number of examples of the "moral perversion" that has resulted from the reign of "market fundamentalist" thinking, he does not *demonstrate* that "market fundamentalism" is a "faith." Given that I regard it as important to do so, I herein supplement Korten's presentation by:

- "Fleshing out" what he calls "market fundamentalism"—and what I call the *laissez-faire* model. (Note that I have put "theory" in quotation marks in my title above, to indicate that market fundamentalism should not be dignified with the label "theory," "model" being the more appropriate label. See the "Theory, Model, and Normative Structure" section in the Appendix for an attempt at clarification.).

- Then demonstrating that the *laissez-faire* model stands on a base of loose sand—a demonstration that is only possible because of the previous "fleshing out."

The fact that *laissez-faire* thinking rests on an extremely weak foundation has not, of course, prevented it from rising to prominence. But exposing that weak foundation may help reduce its

popularity. (A recent book by Clyde Prestowitz goes further on this matter than I do here, I should add.) That's my hope, at any rate (I hesitate to say "faith"!).

Before launching into a discussion of what *laissez-faire* thinking involves ,and what its weaknesses are, I would like to make some background comments pertaining to societal systems.

Background Comments

I should perhaps begin by observing that a societal system is a complex "thing": It consists of (a) tangible things such as people, buildings, consumer/producer goods, and roads; but also (b) institutions (marriage, economic, political, religious, etc.), (c) behavior patterns, (d) knowledge/technology, and (e) beliefs/ideals/valuations. The latter (which are the essence of a *worldview*) "power" the system, while simultaneously being supported/fostered by the other components of the system; the "educational"[38] institutions, of course, but the other institutions as well. Thus, on the one hand, the way of life (conceived broadly) provided by a societal system inculcates, in members of the society, a certain worldview; and individuals, in then acting on that worldview, tend to behave in a fashion that perpetuates the Existing Order. The fact that the Existing Order is "perpetuated" does not, of course, mean that it remains static; but the change that it "endures" tends not to change its basic character, except rather slowly.

What makes the various components of a system all part of the same system is that they work together, mutually support one another. Which is not to say, however, that a societal system is closely analogous to a machine in consisting just of compatible components that work together smoothly. Likely, any societal system is characterized by a certain "looseness," the presence of certain (near) contradictions. But those contradictions usually do not prevent the societal system from functioning; indeed, they may serve to give the system adaptability.

The "looseness" of a societal system is manifest in its *worldview* component; for although a societal system has a *dominant* worldview, it also has various *secondary* worldviews as well. A given secondary one may be associated with a given subordinate group(s) in the society—so that, e.g., Thorstein Veblen associated a *de facto* mentality with workers and engineers, a *de jure* one with dominant groups in the society.[39] Or a given secondary worldview may be associated with week*ends*, the dominant one associated with week*days*—so that, e.g., Veblen associated (in effect, at any rate) a "morals of Christianity" worldview with Sundays, a "morals of competition"

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[38] I put "educational" in quotation marks because such institutions usually provide more in the way of training than education, and tend to be purveyors of ideology supportive of the Existing Order.

[39] Veblen did not see these subsocieties as equals which co-existed peacefully. Rather, he saw the former as dominating the latter, the former having a parasitic—even predatory—relationship with the latter. See his *The Theory of Business Enterprise*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904.

one with the rest of the week.[40] (Which doesn't say much for the importance that Christianity plays in our society!—other than as a *belief* and *ritual* system.)

The dominant worldview itself may be somewhat "messy" in that it may contain various vestigial elements. Indeed, I like to think of the dominant worldview in our society today as being somewhat analogous to a tureen of soup—especially the soup in the famous "stone soup" story. I realize that "analogies are the camouflage of loose thinking,"[41] but think it somewhat useful to think of the currently-prevailing worldview as an accretion of worldviews that have been added to the "soup" during different periods of time. Thus, I see an ancient "masculine"[42] component, an "individualistic" component,[43] a classical economic "theory" component (discussed in this paper), a more recent "scientific" addition,[44] a Social Darwinism element, and a narcissistic addition.[45] And perhaps a new ingredient has been added more recently, relating to the increased use of personal computers, laptops, ipods, the world wide web, etc.

Of these "ingredients," I see the classical economic (i.e., *laissez faire*) "theory" and Social Darwinism ones as being particularly important.[46] And I think it important to note that people *see* through the lens provided by the dominant worldview, and therefore are rarely able to see *through* that lens. By exposing herein the nature of *laissez faire* thinking, I hope to help people see *through* it—so that it will no longer "possess" them, and they will be then able to deal with it appropriately (i.e., discard it!).

To return to my comments on societal systems: The worldview of a society can be thought of as a series of premises/assumptions (the *explanans*), and the conclusion(s) (the *explanandum* or

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[40] "Christian Morals and the Competitive System," reprinted in *Essays in Our Changing Order*, edited by Leon Ardzrooni. New York: The Viking Press, 1934, pp. 200-18. First published, in 1910, in *The International Journal of Ethics*.

[41] Alfred Cobban, *In Search of Humanity: The Role of the Enlightenment in Modern History*. New York: George Braziller, 1960, p. 240.

[42] Marilyn French, *Beyond Power*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1985.

[43] Stemming, e.g., from the writings of John Locke.

[44] Arthur N. Strahler, *Understanding Science: An Introduction to Concepts and Issues*. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1992.

[45] Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1979; and Aaron Stern, *ME: The Narcissistic American*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1979.

[46] Various other components might also be mentioned. For example, there are "moralistic," and "traditionalist" "political cultures" of Daniel J. Elazar; and the "constrained" and "unconstrained" "visions" of Thomas Sowell. Daniel J. Elazar, *American Federalism: A View From the States*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984 (third edition), pp. 114-42; Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1987.

explananda) which logically follows (purportedly) from those premises/assumptions. Most of the premises/assumptions constituting a worldview state (purported) truths; some may, though, state—or imply—valuations. The conclusion(s) which is a part of a worldview describes a salient feature of the society, and supposedly is a *valid* conclusion—i.e., one that logically follows from the premises/assumptions. Given this, one can say that the premises/assumptions *explain* the conclusion—so that the worldview can be thought of as a "theory" of sorts. It is, however, more accurate (honest!) to admit that the premises/assumptions of a worldview *rationalize/justify* the Existing Order, rather than *explain* it in a scientific sense.

A society's worldview not merely *guides* (directly, at least) behavior; it *drives* behavior. Paradoxically, however, the worldview of a society is rarely *clearly visible*: Given that it typically amounts to apologetics which (directly) serve the interests of the elite, the elite makes no effort to make the worldview explicit. Thus, a fog tends to develop, and reduce the visibility of the worldview. This fog is, of course, usually difficult to see through: Because one tends to *see* through the worldview, one finds it difficult to see *through* it. Indeed, although it is the worldview of a society that drives behavior, the claim may be advanced (with the tacit blessings of the ruling class) that *something else* does. For example, recently sociobiologists and their minions have been making the claim that behavior basically has a genetic basis. Although this claim is perhaps not being made by members of the elite, or even its lieutenants, those advancing it are *serving the interests* of the elite; for their efforts divert attention away from the prevailing societal worldview and its role in driving behavior.

The worldview of a society evolves over time—although the word "changes" might be more apt here, given that "evolves" suggests that a worldview *improves*, becomes somehow "better," over time. *Why* does it change? Seemingly, a worldview changes in response to societal system change: As a societal system changes (in response to technological changes, etc.), this "drags" the worldview with it (with some lag); so that rather than the worldview causing societal system change, the reverse is true. A worldview, then, *does* play a causal role, but only at a certain (limited) "scale."

As a society changes, the nature of the elite likewise changes (meaning that the *elite* does not change a society; rather, the *society* changes the elite); as a new elite emerges, it is helped along by the emergence of a new (or at least modified) worldview. This new worldview must be made (at least partially) explicit; and once it has become explicit, the emerging elite uses it to help it emerge to dominance. But once it has dominance, the elite is content to allow a fog to build around the worldview—so that its very invisibility helps give it force.

In discussing the *laissez faire* model I begin (Section I) by presenting the initial—the "pure"—version of the model. In Section II I then comment on the premises constituting the model (i.e., the *explanans*), as well as the *explananda* of the model (i.e., that which the model explains—purportedly, at least). In Section III I introduce modifications into the model, to help make it

explain more accurately. In Section IV I comment on perhaps the most important concept associated with the model, that of *meritocracy*. And, finally, in an Appendix I compare *laissez faire* thinking with utopian thinking—which enables me to further critique the former.

I. The Initial Version

Let me begin by asserting that the dominant portion of the prevailing worldview today is an updated version of one which had been developing prior to 1776, and was then given initial shape by Adam Smith [1723-1790][47] in his classic *Wealth of Nations* [1776].[48] The updating which has occurred involved incorporating the Darwinian "theory" of natural selection into it—one implication being that the worldview got changed from one emphasizing *stasis* (as if change does not occur over time) to one emphasizing *dynamism*, "evolution" in particular. My focus here, however, is on *laissez faire* thinking proper rather than later additions to our worldview.

A. The Model Itself[49]

The premises/assumptions (i.e., the *explanans*) comprising (*implicitly* at least) the initial—the "pure"—version of the *laissez faire* model can be thought of as follows:

1. Only matter is "real."

2. Regarding people, only *individuals* are real. Human superunits—e.g., families, clans, tribes, nations—are mere intellectual fictions, abstractions.

3. A *society* is a mere collection of individuals (i.e., an atomistic conception of society is assumed). Insofar as a society *is* "real," it is something created by the individuals who comprise it ("social contract"); as such, it can have no influence on the individuals in it: "societal influence" is a fiction, an impossibility. However, there is one qualification regarding human superunits: *Government* is real; indeed, because of that fact, it can "interfere" in the realm of human activities—can, in fact, *only* interfere.

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[47] Smith's time has been referred to by Karl Polanyi as a period of *The Great Transformation*. New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1944.

[48] For discussions of Smith see, e.g., Thorstein Veblen, "The Preconceptions of Economic Science: II," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 1899; reprinted in Veblen's *The Place of Science in Modern Civilisation*. New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1919, pp. 114-47 (pp. 114-30 in particular); J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish, *The Western Intellectual Tradition*. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1960, Chapter 19 ("Adam Smith"), pp. 336-56; and Jerry Z. Muller, *Adam Smith in His Time and Ours: Designing the Decent Society*. New York: The Free Press, 1993.

[49] For some historical background see Albert O. Hirschman, *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism Before Its Triumph*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977.

4. Individuals are perceived in uni-dimensional (i.e., *reductionistic*) terms—only as actors in the economy (i.e., producers and consumers of goods/services).

5. Economic activities (in terms of production and exchange) are conducted by household heads (males); "domestic" activities—not recognized as "economic" activities because they involve no remuneration—are engaged in by wives (females) and children. All members of a given household consume, of course. Indeed, the only significance of women is that they bear children and are consumers; and the only significance of children is that they are consumers.

6. Household heads are similar in innate abilities. But because each household head acquires certain skills as a specialist, household heads vary in skills. These skills result from practice, however, not genetic inheritance. (Wives, though, because they all perform the same basic set of domestic tasks—preparing food, doing laundry, cleaning, etc.—differ very little one from another.)

7. Household heads are similar in their willingness to work—i.e., there is no variation in degree of industriousness/laziness.

8. Household heads are similar in motivation. Each is "driven" by a desire to maintain survival (this requiring the acquisition and consumption of certain goods) and, beyond mere survival, to attain a certain level of (material) comfort—this level of comfort being the same for all household heads, and being attainable. Given that work is irksome (i.e., involves discomfort), each household head strives to minimize the number of work hours (e.g., weekly) required to attain the given "standard of living."

9. Household heads are either self-employed, or sell their labor to another household head (firm); thus, the production units of the economy are not necessarily all one-household units. Given that buyer and seller of labor bargain on equal terms, no employee is exploited; in Marxian terms, no employee produces "surplus value" expropriated by the buyer of labor ("capitalist").

10. The exchange process is "frictionless" in that no time/cost is involved. It's as if all elements of the economy in question existed at a single point on the earth's surface! (It's amazing how theoreticians in most "social science" disciplines are able to assume away—tacitly, at any rate—the existence of *geographical* space, yet are able to recognize the fact of *time*!)

B. The Conclusions

What conclusions logically follow from these assumptions/premises? Once we add the assumption that a force analogous to gravity (but referred to as an "invisible hand" by Smith) is acting on household heads, along with the assumption that there is a "beneficent natural order" (established, and maintained, by God?), we arrive at the following conclusions (beyond the facts

that the "market" ensures that the right goods are produced, in the right quantities,[50] the number of specialists in any given production specialty being exactly what's needed; do these "facts" obtain *because* a "beneficient natural order" exists?):

1. Any given household consumes the same array of goods that it would if it were producing just for its own needs ("prosuming," to use Alvin Toffler's term[51])—but expends *less time* doing so (a fruit of the "division of labor"[52]).

2. Given that specialists are able to produce not only quickly, but with skill, any given household is able to consume *higher-quality* goods than would be possible under a regime of prosuming (i.e., self-sufficient households).

3. Insofar as the economy contains some producing units which involve several household heads, the economy is able to make available some *kinds* of goods whose production would not be *possible* under a regime of prosuming.

4. All households spend the same amount of time working, and obtain the same array of goods.

5. A *meritocracy* exists in the sense that each household receives (in goods) what it *deserves* (i.e., receives in proportion to effort expended). In this case, however, there is no *variation* between households in income: Everyone *merits* the same income, and everyone *receives* the same income. Household heads differ in the *industry* with which they are associated; they do not, though, differ in *social class*. A classless society, thus, exists—the socialist ideal! (Except, perhaps, for the fact that women are basically a faceless blob in this model: All are domestics, interchangeable ones at that.)

II. Comments on the Initial Version

In commenting upon the *laissez faire* model, I begin with the premises/assumptions that constitute the model. And what I emphasize is the dependence of Smithian thinking (at the tacit

[50] Economists might not want to admit it, but what seems to have prompted the development of supply-demand analysis was the embarrassing fact that Karl Marx was in the "classic" tradition of using the labor theory of value. Supply-demand analysis permitted economists to disassociate themselves from Marx, and regain a claim to be in the "classic" tradition while removing Marx from it. See Benjamin Ward, *What's Wrong With Economics?* New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1972, pp. 16 and 58.

[51] See Toffler's *The Third Wave*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1980, Chapter 20 ("The Rise of the Prosumer"), pp. 251-73.

[52] Adam Smith did not, interestingly enough, believe that machinery would improve productivity of labor much; rather, he emphasized the importance of a division of labor.

level, at least) upon Newtonian physics—Isaac Newton[53] [1642-1727] having publicized his cosmological ideas just a few decades earlier.[54] I comment on each premise/assumption point by point, then do the same with the five (5) conclusions listed above. Before presenting these comments, however, I should point out that Adam Smith is often described as an advocate of self-interested behavior—and that it is often argued that the "good things" of a free market economy all result mainly from self-interested behavior. It is true that Smith, in his often-quoted "invisible hand" discussion gave some support to self-interested behavior. But that comment was by no means central to Smith's thinking: The statement doesn't appear until Book IV, chapter ii—and this is the *only* place where the "invisible hand" is referred to in *Wealth of Nations*.[55] In addition, one must keep in mind that if Smith were writing his classic in 2011, he might not even make *any* reference to an "invisible hand"!

A. The Premises/Assumptions

1. The (tacit) assumption that only matter is real is a "reductionistic" assumption, true, but one in accordance with "scientific" thinking as it had developed since Francis Bacon [1561-1626]. Note that the assumption that only matter is real reflects the influence of Newtonian physics.[56]

2. The assumption, regarding people, that only individuals are real, again reflects a decisive Newtonian influence. Note that what we have here, though, is a different sort of reductionism than with the first assumption.

3. What is assumed regarding society (that it is a fiction, real only insofar as a social contract makes it so) is inaccurate. Historically, it appears that societies originated *before* individuals (in the sense of self-conscious individuals), rather than the reverse. So that what the worldview assumes here is utterly lacking in realism. In addition, it *is*, in fact, rational to believe that

[53] See, e.g., this by Şule Özler, and this, by "religious" writer Peter D. Goodgame (Part 5: "The Triumph of the Merchants," of his *Red Moon Rising: The Rapture and the Timeline of the Apocalypse*, 2005). Also, Leonidas Montes, "Newton's Real Influence on Adam Smith and its Context," 2008.

[54] As Steven Rose has pointed out, Newton's ideas themselves were not that original. He points out that in 1931 Nikolai Bukharin of the Soviet Union delivered a paper in London in which he argued that "far from being a work of pure scientific scholarship isolated from the social conditions of the time, Newton's experiments, theories and the framework in which they were set--their paradigms therefore, in [Thomas S.] Kuhnian language—had been shaped by the new economic demands of England's rising merchant class." *Lifelines: Biology Beyond Determinism*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 51. One might argue, indeed, that what Newton was for the rising *merchant* class, Darwin was later for the rising *industrialist* class.

[55] Jerry Z. Muller, *op. cit.*, p. 86. See also Jonathan Schlefer, "Today's Most Mischievous Misquotation," *The Atlantic*, Vol. 281 (March 1998), pp. 16, 18, 19.

[56] E. F. Schumacher (*A Guide for the Perplexed*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977) has, rather, identified four "Levels of Being" (the title of Chapter 2, pp. 15-25): mineral, plant, animal, and man [i.e., humans]. I might add that the narrowness of Western vision (in recognizing only the material as real) is something that Celtic religious figures—and Celtic-influenced *Christians*—have criticized.

individuals are influenced by the superunits of which they are a part; indeed, the discipline of Sociology is built on the assumption that individuals create superunits, and that those superunits then create (or at least strongly influence) individuals. Finally, it is absurd to assume that government can only "interfere."[57] But note that this assumption reflects the influence of Newtonian thinking—and is one that was to the interests of the emerging elite.

4. The treatment of individuals as just actors in the economy is an expression of the reductionism derived from Newtonian physics: Only individuals are real, but the only real thing about them is their economic activities. The fact of the matter, of course, is that individuals are much more interesting—and complex—than this model makes them out to be!

5. The assumption that economic activities are carried on by household heads involves a grudging recognition that the household exists as a human superunit. Tacitly, the household is seen as a unit of procreation, child care, and consumption (except that women and children are treated as if they didn't really exist!); but given what is assumed regarding motivation (see point 8 below), it is not clear why households would form, and why procreation would occur! Although the existence of households is recognized (at least tacitly), households are held to be not "real" in the sense of being capable of affecting their members—which means that the worldview denies the possibility of "contextual" variables. Put another way, the model is "psychologistic" in holding that the behavior of an individual is a function of, and only of, certain *internal* (and internalized) characteristics (in conjunction with a force analogous to gravity). Again, the model shows the influence of Newtonian physics.

6. The assumption that household heads are similar in (innate) ability means that individuals are perceived as analogous to chunks of granite; thus, we have here another manifestation of the reductionism of the model—and Newtonian influence. The *kinds* of abilities that had relevance (for production) when this model was being created may not have had a strong genetic component; thus, the assumption may have had a degree of realism then. Seemingly, this assumption of equality in ability was a benign one; one can argue, however, that it was advantageous to the emerging elite in that it excused them from paying heed to the situations of the poor: It enabled them to ignore the plight of the poor in good conscience (e.g., Scrooge before his mysterious visitors).

7. The assumption that household heads are similar in willingness to work: See the comment under point (6) above.

8. The assumption regarding motivation of household heads is obviously Newtonian. Note that individuals are not assumed to pursue "happiness," and it is not clear *why* they strive to maximize their leisure time—because it is not at all clear what they *do* during "off" time! I

[57] Especially given the truism that "remove the state and the regime of capital would not last a day." Robert Heilbronner, *The Nature and Logic of Capitalism*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985, p. 105.

would like to think, however, that the model assumes that although material goods contribute to well-being, their contribution is limited; that once one obtains certain goods/services (for sustenance/comfort), one's well-being comes from other sources—such as interacting with others (having similar values), communing with nature, etc. (i.e., realizing their "design specifications"[58]). But this is perhaps wishful thinking on my part!

9. The assumed equality of buyers and sellers of labor is another manifestation of reductionism and Newtonianism—and is an assumption utterly lacking in realism. Again, we have an assumption that worked to the advantage of the emerging elite.

10. The assumption that the exchange process is "frictionless" suggests, tacitly, that all households reside at a single point in geographic space! It should perhaps be recognized that the world's first explicitly *geographical* model was not created until the early 1800s—by German Johann Heinrich von Thünen. If Adam Smith's thinking lacked a geographic dimension, Smith can be excused—for he died in 1790. Theorists since Smith, however, cannot be excused for "theorizing" about a fictional—indeed impossible—dimensionless world.

B. The Conclusions

As to the *conclusions* (purportedly) following from the premises/assumptions of the model, the following comments can be made:

1. The conclusion that a household would consume the same array of goods/services as under a regime of prosuming, but work fewer hours, is a *valid* (i.e., logical) conclusion from the premises; but, of course, the latter sort of regime is purely hypothetical. An approximation of such a regime may have existed in certain places at certain times (e.g., homesteaders settling west of the Mississippi River after the Civil War). But such a regime likely never has existed in its pure form. Nevertheless, the *concept* of a regime of prosumers is useful as a benchmark with which a regime of producer-traders can be compared. Certainly it is easy to imagine that the people in the latter regime would be producing/consuming everything that the people in the former regime would be producing/consuming—plus a little more.

2. The conclusion that the residents of a producer-trader regime would be able to produce higher-quality goods than those of a prosumer regime is reasonable, for the former sort of regime permits the honing of skills. If jobs become too specialized, however, those doing them may find that they (the jobs) lack challenge—so that productivity and quality suffer. Paradoxically, however, managers rarely seem to have the wisdom to realize this fact, and "dumb down" jobs even though this may result in lowered productivity/quality.

[58] See Chapters 3 and 4 of my *What Are Churches For?*

3. The conclusion that more kinds of goods would be available with a regime of producer-traders than one of prosumers is a logical one, but only if one assumes the formation of large organizations. Note that such organizations *need not* be hierarchical in structure, with a clear separation of "capitalist" and "worker"—but in real-world terms usually are.

4. The conclusion that all households would spend the same amount of time working, and would obtain the same array of goods/services follows logically from the premises/assumptions stated; but such a conclusion would not be expected to hold in the real world.

5. The conclusion that a meritocracy would result—and that this meritocracy would be a classless society—follows logically from the premises/assumptions. I would add that in "predicting" a classless society the initial version of classical economic "theory" may predict fairly well the social situation as it existed in England prior to the Industrial Revolution. At any rate, Thorstein Veblen stated early in this century:[59] "[The development of a handicraft-petty trade economy in England prior to the Industrial Revolution can be thought of] as a qualified or mitigated (sophisticated) return to the spirit of savagery, or at least as a spiritual reversion looking in that direction, though by no means abruptly reaching the savage plane." (One must keep in mind here that by "savagery" Veblen meant what today we would term a gatherer-hunter—or forager—mode of existence. In his 1910 "Christian Morals and the Competitive System" Veblen had referred to "the promptings of hereditary savage human nature which make for fellowship and Christian charity."[60] Veblen's positive assessment of "savagery"—and the life in accord with human nature therewith associated—has been confirmed many times over by subsequent anthropological research.)

III. Modifications

The conclusions of the Initial Version "fit the facts" of the time fairly well, but were glaringly erroneous in predicting a classless society: The England-Scotland of Smith's time was decidedly *not* classless. And, in what was to become the United States there was (as, e.g. Robert A. Nisbet has pointed out[61]) "a distinct feudal character" to colonial society. How, then, can we "fix" the model so that it will yield variations in household income (if not social class—a concept that involves more than just income)? Let us first "complexify" the model by changing premise (7). Rather than assuming equality in industriousness, let us assume variability from one household head to another in that variable. What logically follows now?

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[59] *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1914, p. 204.

[60] Reprinted in Veblen's *Essays in Our Changing Order*, edited by Leon Ardzrooni. New York: The Viking Press, 1934, p. 209.

[61] "The Social Impact of the [American] Revolution," in *America's Continuing Revolution*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1976, pp. 69-93.

Operationally, what this change means is that household heads vary in the number of hours devoted to "work" (each week, month, etc.). Household heads therefore vary in the amount they produce (expressed in monetary terms—given that a common unit of measurement is required to enable inter-personal comparison across industry groups). Because of this, they vary in what they can acquire (note that acquisition is assumed *not* to occur via theft!); and given the assumptions that a household head will acquire all that (a) he is able to acquire, and that the household will then (b) consume all that is acquired, there will be variation between households in "standard of living."

Note that this conclusion impacts on premise (8)—indicating that the assumptions of the model are not necessarily independent one of another. What we can postulate here is that although initially all household heads may desire for their households a standard of living common to all, once households begin acquiring different quantities of goods (for whatever reasons) this may affect their motivational structure. That is, if a household head is *able* to acquire more than his "target" amount, he may in fact go ahead and *acquire* an "excess"—and then set his "target" at a higher level of acquisition.[62]

Although variation in industriousness *can* explain variation in income/standard of living, not all may agree that such variation *does* in fact explain variation in income/standard of living (during, e.g., Smith's time). Rather than using industriousness as an explanatory variable, some may argue that, e.g., variation in *motivation* is the key factor. That household heads vary in their goals, and therefore in how much they wish to acquire; which factor affects how hard they work, which factor, in turn, determines how much they acquire—and how much members of the household consume. In a sense, Veblen's "industrial" and "pecuniary" categories[63] (with accompanying mindsets) recognize this possibility. For I would associate more (in terms of hours) work with "industrial" activity than with "pecuniary" activity; but—paradoxically—more income is associated with the latter sort of activity than with the former.

Even after modifying the Initial Version by "relaxing" its assumptions concerning industriousness and/or motivation, the model may be regarded as still providing an unconvincing explanation of household income variation. What is likely to be the next step in "complexifying" the model—thereby bringing it closer to the ground (i.e., reality)—is to modify premise (6). Rather than assuming equality in innate ability, one may assume inequality—and in terms of various "dimensions." For example, one may assume variation in business acumen, and argue that household income is positively correlated (and strongly so) with degree of business acumen.

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[62] Andrew Bard Schmookler has argued that "over time, the market system shapes the values that govern the choices we make." *The Illusion of Choice: How the Market Economy Shapes Our Destiny*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993, p. 12.

[63] "Industrial and Pecuniary Employments," *The Place . . . .*, pp. 279-323. First published in *Publications of the American Economic Association*, 1900.

If business acumen is a type of mental ability (rather than skill—perhaps it is both) which can be plausibly postulated as a factor explaining "success," so can other mental abilities: managerial, leadership, organizational—and cognitive (to list only some possibilities). The latter mental ability is more commonly referred to as *intelligence*; Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray often used it in place of "intelligence" several years ago in *The Bell Curve*.[64] Given that many (but certainly not all) jobs in the current U. S. economy involve "brain work" rather than skill (mechanical, artistic, musical, woodworking, etc.) or physical labor *per se*, it is certainly plausible to argue that "success" in contemporary America is a function of intelligence/cognitive ability. To argue, that is, that our society is not only a meritocracy today, but one based on intelligence. But *is* this the case? And is a meritocratic society *desirable* anyway? Let us address these questions in the next section.

IV. Meritocracy

There are two questions to address here: (a) *Is* our society a meritocracy? (b) Is a meritocracy a *desirable* objective?

A. Does a Meritocracy Exist?

Let us assume that a sample is selected of Americans who work for pay, and assume that for each individual in the sample annual income is determined along with "intelligence." Assume further that "intelligence" has been measured on a continuous scale—on, indeed, a ratio scale. (Note that no existing IQ test, so far as I know, measures "intelligence" on a true ratio scale.) Assume, finally, that the simple correlation (Pearson's *r*) is determined between these two variables, and that the correlation coefficient is found to be +0.95. That is, a positive—and very strong—relationship is found between the two variables.

Ostensibly, we have found *the* explanation of "success" in the United States. One could, of course, question whether the instrument used for measuring "intelligence" *really* measures what it purports to. But even if one does not question the accuracy of the test involved, one could still question whether one's research had established that the United States is a meritocracy based on cognitive ability. Those who *would* make such a claim (tacitly) assume that the magnitude of one's reward (income) is a function of the magnitude of one's societal contribution; and that *that* magnitude, in turn, is a function of one's cognitive ability/intelligence. But note that the hypothetical research referred to above involved no mention of the variable "societal contribution."

I asserted earlier that the Initial Version "predicted" a meritocracy. I can now add that in that earlier discussion I implicitly thought of "hours worked" as a measure of societal contribution

[26] Richard J. Herrnstein and Charles Murray, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*. New York: The Free Press, 1994.

(for it was, I assumed tacitly, directly correlated with amount of production/output). And given that I tacitly assumed that income would be a function of hours worked, income would be a function of societal contribution (operationalized as hours worked).

If we turn now to our hypothetical situation within which an individual's income is assumed to be a *function* of one's "intelligence" (and not merely *correlated* with intelligence), can we also assert that a meritocracy exists in this situation? Can we think of income as being a function of societal contribution, and societal contribution, in turn, as being a function of intelligence? It is, true, commonly assumed (at least implicitly) that the income one receives is a measure of one's societal contribution; at any rate, those who receive large incomes usually seem to believe that they are paid well because they contribute much (Mitt Romney being an example!). There is, however, good reason to doubt that income is a good measure of societal contribution. (Indeed, Veblen regarded high-income people as parasites/predators!—but one must admit that operationalizing the variable "societal contribution" in a meaningful way would be a daunting task.) This is an empirical question that has yet to be resolved. In the meantime, we must conclude that there is no good reason for believing that a society within which income is positively (and strongly) correlated with some measure of intelligence is *thereby* a meritocracy.

B. Is a Meritocracy "Good"?

In the case of value judgments *per se* it may not be possible to obtain objectivity, i.e., inter-subjective reliability (agreement between people as to what is "good," what is not). It is, however, possible to cite reasons in support of one's value judgments—and advisable so to do if one wishes to "convert" others to one's way of thinking. Thus, I will do so here. The first point I would make is that our Judaeo-Christian heritage (at least in terms of the *ideals* associated with that tradition[65]) teaches us to be oriented to our *duties*, rather than our *deserts*, whereas the thrust of meritocratic thinking is on the latter. So that meritocratic thinking is *intrinsically* unChristian. But apart from this, additional comments can also be directed against meritocratic "philosophy."

Let me first here point out that (what might be termed our Basic Societal (i.e., BS!) model—especially in its Initial Version—is heavily dependent on Newtonian physics. An implication of this fact (and one not commonly recognized) is that the conclusions of the BS model are thereby made to appear "*natural*" and—as such—*necessary*. What this means is that a valuation in favor of meritocracy seems to be *precluded*: For if society is organized in accordance with certain universal "laws of nature," it *can't* be changed—so that it is, therefore, pointless to declare it to be either good or bad. Indeed, attempts to change it *should not* be attempted; for any such attempts represent "interference" (whether initiated by governmental officials or others). And some might even go so far as to assert that the "laws of nature" involved here were established—and are ordained—by God; so that to attempt to change the society is to rebel against God!

[65] Needless to say, the realities associated with that tradition have been far removed from the ideals.

We need to be aware of these points because they help us understand why so many are resistant to rejecting meritocracy as a goal, rooted as the concept is in an evolved version of our BS model. Thus, even if we *reject* meritocracy as a goal on religious grounds, we should not be surprised to encounter others who *accept* meritocracy as a goal (along, perhaps, with "survival of the fittest")—*also* on religious grounds.

A meritocracy is conceived as a society within which household heads receive in proportion to contribution (or at least "merit" in some sense); and is implicitly a society within which household heads use the income they receive to purchase goods for members of the household—and only them. That is, household heads are assumed to give nothing to individuals outside the household—for that would diminish the well-being of the members of one's household. Indeed, the relevant model behind meritocracy gives the household head a *rationale* for not giving to others: "Others are receiving in accordance with what they deserve, just as I am; if others are poorer than I am, why should *I* give to them, given that they are receiving what *they* deserve? Indeed, if I help the poor, am I not helping the 'unfit' (to bring a Social Darwinian concept into the argument), and thereby contributing to the biological deterioration of the species? Also, given that my well-being—and that of other members of my household—will be reduced if I give to others, it is unreasonable to expect me to do so." (As an aside, it should be obvious that a believer in meritocracy will never be heard to sing, "He's not heavy, he's my brother"!)

One can, of course, object to this rationale on religious grounds (just as one can object to various of the premises of BS model on the grounds of a lack of realism, or that they involve making demeaning assumptions about humans—e.g., treating humans as if they were merely economic creatures). That is, one can argue that from different "angles" meritocracy model appears unChristian, or otherwise unworthy of acceptance as a goal.

It seems to me, however, that the basic flaw of the BS model which underlies the valuation that meritocracy is "good" is that it is highly unrealistic in what it assumes about humans as *biological* creatures. I would contend that the human, *qua* human, has certain "design specifications" which s/he shares with all other humans (and that we can infer these specifications by, e.g., studying humans in contemporary gatherer-hunter societies). (Note, by the way, that I am not denying here that each person has unique needs.) I would contend that among these design specifications is a need not only to *interact* with others, but a need to *do* for others. *Healthy Pleasures*, by Robert Ornstein and David Sobel,[66] is merely one work providing evidence in support of this assertion (the recent research of, e.g., de Waal and Keltner—referred to earlier—providing additional, and even better, support).. Thus, whereas the model underlying meritocracy thinking seems to assert that humans derive happiness from—and only from—the consumption of material goods, the truth of the matter is rather different. Indeed, people are

[66] Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1989.

foolish to allow themselves to become "possessed" by this assumption, for their well-being is not served by it. (But why, then, do so many of our fellows allow themselves to be so possessed?!)

Not only is it the case that individuals, *qua* individuals, are not served well by this component of the BS model; neither is our society—indeed, our species. For meritocratic thinking—insofar as it is rooted in biological assumptions—utterly "misses the boat" concerning the relevance of human biology (something Veblen seemingly recognized, without, however, applying his brilliant and iconoclastic mind to the subject). For since the "Fall" from a gatherer-hunter existence into a "civilized" one based (initially) on agriculture, human biology has changed but little, whereas ways of life have changed drastically. Whereas prior to the Agricultural Revolution there was a rather good "fit" between human biology and the gatherer-hunter way of life, the ways of life which have developed since then (largely in response to technological developments—especially recently) have become ever more removed from a "natural" way of life. We all, of course, have some "built-in" capacity to adjust, from a neurophysiological standpoint, to our current way of life. But our "plasticity" is not infinite—and adjustment is not necessarily a wise course to take (from a long-run standpoint).

Indeed, I would go so far as to assert that virtually *all* of our current societal problems have their basis in the fact that our current way of life is an "unnatural" one; and that The Discrepancy (between the way of life we have, and that which would be in accord with our "design specifications") is also the basic reason why humans (led by us Americans) are pouring greenhouse gases into the atmosphere (and otherwise assaulting Gaia)—thereby putting the human species itself in jeopardy.

The valuation that meritocracy is a proper goal should, therefore, be rejected not only because it fails to serve people well *as individuals*, but because it endangers our species. A reorientation of our thinking is needed, but I am not among those (remember Charles A. Reich's *The Greening of America* of several years ago?[67]) who insist that what is *primarily* needed, at present, is the widespread adoption of a new "worldview." Rather, I believe that worldview change is needed *in conjunction with* institutional change.

Appendix

A fact that I find of interest is that *laissez-faire* thinking has something in common with utopian[68] thinking: Both involve the *hypothetical*, but in different ways.

[67] New York: Random House, 1970.

[68] A "utopia" is usually thought of as an "ideally perfect place," the term coming from Sir Thomas More's [1478 – 1535] novel *Utopia*, published in 1515. Of course, "impractical" is also usually associated with "utopia"!

In the case of *laissez-faire* thinking, the assumptions that constitute the "theory" are just that, assumptions (i.e., *hypothetically* true statements), rather than laws: The assumptions *claim*, however, to be statements of empirical fact—but are not. The assumptions constituting the model "predict" an outcome and, curiously, that outcome is taken not as a prediction(s) of what *might be*, were the assumptions involved true, but, rather, is given a *normative* interpretation.

I say "curious" here for two reasons. First, although what we have here is actually a "predictive model" (analogous to the one that Johann von Thünen [1783 – 1850][69] published several decades after Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* was published [1776]). Second, its "prediction(s)"—treated, *wrongly*, as an explanation—is given a *normative* interpretation, there being no basis for giving it such an interpretation. Put another way, we are presented with no explicit rationale for viewing the model's prediction(s) as being of a normative nature. Evidently, the (unstated) rationale for treating the model's prediction(s) as normative are the tacit (but baseless) assumptions that (a) the assumptions of the model are laws of nature, (b) laws of nature are not only "true" but "good," and (c) given that the model's prediction(s) logically follow from its assumptions, that prediction(s) is also both "true" and "good."

These facts regarding *laissez-faire* thinking make one suspect that it is of an *ideological* nature. That is, such thinking suggests that those who interpret the model in the above manner are either (a) individuals who benefit from such an interpretation, or (b) individuals who work for an organization that may benefit. Another possibility is that (c) they attribute (if but unconsciously) "intellectual elegance" to the model, and become so enamored of the model for that reason that they are simply unable to perceive the model in its true light.

That's enough commentary on *laissez-faire* thinking and the role of the hypothetical in it. Let us next consider the case of utopian thinking.

The key feature of utopian writing is that it involves descriptions of the Good Society—which descriptions, of course, are of *hypothetical situations*. A utopian writer makes no claim that the situation being described exists somewhere;[70] indeed, the claim has no *factual* basis, and the creator of the utopia in question, rather, is making a *valuative* judgment—asserting (if but tacitly) that the utopian situation in question is a *desirable* one, and because of that "fact" should be implemented by some given society. Why is it "desirable"? Usually, it would seem, the utopian writer takes for granted that because certain values are "held up" in the society (i.e., honored in the breach, rather than in practice!), readers will perceive that what makes the ideal situation "ideal" is that it conforms with the society's (claimed) value system. Put another way, the writer

[69] Johann Heinrich von Thünen, *Der Isolierte Staat*, 1826. Translated from the German (as *The Isolated State*) by Carla M. Wartenberg. Edited, and with Introduction, by Peter Hall. New York: Pergamon Press, 1966.

[70] In fact, Samuel Butler's [1835 – 1902] satire on Victorian society, *Erewhon* (published in 1872), is "nowhere" spelled backward (but literally "nohwere").

feels no need to "explain himself" (i.e., provide a rationale) for s/he believes that his/her Good Society is "obviously" good—which fact I regard as a major deficiency of the utopian literature.

Theory, Model, and Normative Structure

Near the beginning of this essay I noted that "model" is preferable to "theory" with reference to *laissez faire;* now, however, I qualify this assertion by stating that "normative structure," rather, is the preferable (if somewhat awkward) term to use with reference to *laissez faire.* And I can now also add that although all three involve sets of premises/assumptions from which a conclusion(s) is logically derived, "explanation" is associated only with "theory" and "model" (but "theory" in particular). Meaning, then, that *explanans* is an appropriate label for the premises/assumptions associated with a theory or model, and *explanandum* (or the plural *explananda*) is an appropriate label for the conclusion(s) of a theory or model, those labels are not appropriately applied to a normative structure. The reason? Whereas a theory or model has the purpose of offering an *explanation*, a normative structure has the purpose of providing a *rationale*, a *justification*. There *is* a difference—a huge one, in fact!

The word "theory" is used rather loosely in our society, often meaning a "wild guess" as to why something is (or has been) as it is (or has been), or why something is occurring or has occurred. From a scientific standpoint, however (the one used here), its use should be limited to explanations offered for *laws*—i.e., generalizations with strong empirical support (whether those generalizations are of a universal nature or limited in temporal and/or spatial terms). The assumptions constituting a theory's *explanans*, however, may consist both of assumptions with strong empirical support and ones of a more speculative nature. Theories are always subject to change as new evidence surfaces and new ideas come to the fore; and at any given time more than one "competing" theory may exist, each with its own adherents—with even the possibility that a given person finds more than one theory "acceptable." But the primary fact about a scientific theory is that *what* it purportedly explains is an objective truth—i.e., it has "subjective reliability," meaning that most, if not all, "qualified" individuals agree with its "truthfulness."

A "model," in contrast, is created to explain *observational* situations. It is based on the assumption that although such situations differ one from another, they have a certain commonality: A single set of explanatory *factors* is involved in all individual cases, only the *particularities* of those factors varies. Thus, an initial model will contain simple, tractable assumptions regarding the factors thought to have explanatory relevance, but the model will then be (a) "complexified" by replacing some or all of its assumptions with realistic (or close to realistic) statements for a *given situation*, (b) the model's "prediction' for that situation is determined, and, finally, (c) that "prediction" is compared, statistically, with the empirical version of the "prediction."

If the "fit" is close, one can conclude—tentatively—that the model has included the correct set of factors, and that one has "operationalized" them well. By repeating this process with different

situations, one may be led to modify one's set of factors and one's manner of operationalizing one's factors—i.e., one may "refine" one's model—and continue this process until one is satisfied that it explains well. If other "qualified" individuals then agree with this conclusion, the model is accepted generally as a model that explains well.

A "normative structure" (please help me find a better term!) has similarities with theories and models, but rather than having the purpose of *explaining*, has the purpose of *rationalizing, justifying*. This purpose may not be evident, however—which fact is not surprising given that a normative structure has the (tacit, at least) purpose of serving the interests of some individuals or groups at the expense of other ones, and those whose interests are served don't want that purpose to be known. For if the purpose were "as plain as day," the normative structure in question would quite possibly lose its effectiveness.

It is usually difficult to see *through* a normative structure because one tends to *see* through it—and thereby not notice it, and not realize that one's behavior is being controlled, to a significant extent, by the normative structure. Once one learns to see *through* a given normative structure, one realizes that it consists of "smoke and mirrors," and its power over one will decrease, if not cease. Typically, the premises of a normative structure lack in empirical support, and some of the premises may even be—albeit subtly—of a normative nature. For example, a given premise (alluding here to *laissez faire* thinking) might be that individuals behave "rationally," but the *intent* of such a statement is to assert, tacitly, that individuals *should* act rationally. The "should" here may not be suggested *directly* but, rather, suggested *indirectly*—by suggesting that the *intelligent* thing for people to do is behave rationally.

From the devious assumptions/premises that constitute the rationale, the conclusion(s) that is then drawn becomes a normative one—not one that is "true" but, rather, one that is "good." Despite the fact that the conclusion has been drawn from premises with doubtful "truth value," it is interpreted as having real-world reference—in the sense that this is how it *should* be in the real world. Given such a conclusion, any attempt to change the real-world situation *away* from that conclusion amounts to "interference." No sound basis exists for such a judgment, but that fact is rarely perceived—so that those who offer normative structures are rarely exposed for their chicanery.

As a final point here I would like to note that although Charles Darwin's "natural selection" is often referred to as a "theory," it is no such thing. Rather, it is a model that comes close to being a normative structure. It is a model in the sense that its assumptions are just that—assumptions, rather than statements with firm empirical support. Most notoriously, the model contains an assumption of "excess births," treated as a law, derived from speculations by "Rev." Thomas Malthus earlier. This "law" however was provided no empirical support by Malthus, and neither was the "natural selection" provided any empirical support by Darwin. Beyond this, there is little reason to believe that "natural selection" has been involved with many species—and

certainly was not involved with our species. (Rather, the factors involved with human evolution were environmental change, predation, and sexual selection—each of which is "natural" in its own way, but with a meaning different than that attached to "natural" by Darwin in his concept of "natural selection.")

Despite this fact, biologists continue to write as if it *were* a law. Granted that they have redefined "natural selection" in such a way that no mechanism is any longer associated with "natural selection" (so that it has become an utterly vacuous concept!). But the mere fact that they continue to use the term suggests that they are retaining the meaning that Darwin gave the term—so that there is a certain degree of dishonesty associated with their use of the term.

Worse, given that the claim that "natural selection" is a law of nature suggests that humans are "naturally" selfish and aggressive" (because of the way that "natural selection" was said to "work" by Darwin), this claim has been used to justify selfish, aggressive behavior. It is because of that fact that I say that it comes close to being a normative structure."

Obstacles to the Good Society: Supposed and Actual

Alton C. Thompson

My focus here is on the obstacles—claimed and actual—that stand in the way of achieving the Good Society. Before proceeding, however, I must offer some sort of definition of the Good Society, and do so by borrowing from a 1999 movie, *Blast From the Past*: The Good Society consists of gentlemen—or, in the case of females, gentlemen-like individuals. The relevant speech in the movie is this one, spoken by Troy (played by Dave Foley):

> You know, I asked him about that. He said, good manners are just a way of showing other people we have respect for them. See, I didn't know that, I thought it was just a way of acting all superior. Oh and you know what else he told me? He thinks I'm a gentleman and you're a lady . . . I mean, I thought a "gentleman" was somebody that owned horses. But it turns out, his short and simple definition of a lady or a gentleman is, someone who always tries to make sure the people around him or her are as comfortable as possible.

(The "him" here is Adam, played by Brendan Fraser.)

A gentleman,[71] by this definition, is one who has empathy for the others with whom he has contact, is distressed if those others are in pain or in need, and will do what he can to address existing needs. A gentleman, however, has no desire to impose himself on the other, for he does not want to damage the other's sense of self-esteem, nor does he wish to convert the other to his own way of thinking. Rather, the gentleman wants the other not only to be himself, but to develop his latent capabilities—and himself develop into a gentleman. Living in an age of rapid communication, "others with whom he has contact" includes not just those within speaking-hearing range, but those in his neighborhood, his community, his state, his region, his country, and the world as a whole. In addition, the gentleman's interest in his fellows extends not only across space, but extends into the future.

Much more could, of course, be said regarding the nature of the Good Society—e.g., that cooperative behavior prevails in it—but expanding on the topic further would draw me too far from the topic that I wish to address here—obstacles (claimed and actual) to achieving the Good Society. A tacit assumption here, of course, is that our current society is *not* an approximation of the Good Society—an assumption that I feel no need to defend. I *do* assume, that our society *should* be such a society—which judgment I also feel no need to defend. I take both of these as "givens" which you, as a reader, may or may not accept; I assume, however, that the very fact that you are reading this essay indicates that you also accept both of my "givens."

[71] To avoid awkwardness of expression, I limit myself here to "gentleman," and also refer to the "other" as a male—although my intention here is to include both sexes.

To accept the "fact" that our society is not now a Good Society, and the value judgment that it *should* be, is not necessarily to believe that it *will*—or even *can*—be. However, if I had no hope for our society's improvement, I would not have bothered writing this essay. It is the fact that I *do* have some measure of hope that is the basis for my writing the essay.

In addressing obstacles *claimed* for realizing the Good Society, I will focus on just one—the claim that humans are, by nature, *competitive*, rather than cooperative, and that *therefore* the Good Society—as I envision it—is unattainable. Furthermore, I limit my attention to that claim to two works by Charles Darwin [1809 – 1882]. Having "disposed" of Darwin (!), I identify the *real* obstacles that exist in our society that prevent us from having a Good Society.

My goals here are threefold:

- To demonstrate that the notion of competition played a prominent role in Darwin's evolutionary thinking—including that pertaining to humans.
- To indicate the lack of empirical support for Darwin's claims and to identify the factors, rather, that played a role in human evolution.
- Having dismissed the factor of competition—as a natural proclivity—as an obstacle to creating the Good Society, I then identify the *actual* obstacles.

As it will be seen that these obstacles are all rooted in human "cultural" developments rather than our biology, they are subject to change. This is not to say that their change will be easy—for it will not be. But I believe that if these factors are "named," their power over us will be lessened, and we will thereby be in a better position to decide:

- What features—individual and societal—the Good Society should have.
- How to "get there."

In this essay, however, I limit my attention to the above three topics, having in another work already given attention to the "features" and "getting there" questions. As my starting point here is to demonstrate the prominence of the idea of competition in Darwin's thinking regarding evolution, and doing so requires me to discuss Darwin's "theory" of Natural Selection, I begin with Darwin's definition of Natural Selection. First, though, some introductory comments:

A. The Role of Competition in Darwin's Thinking

1. Introduction

The fundamental *fact* underlying the *concept* of evolution is that individuals vary in their inherited characteristics. Individuals can also vary in their *acquired* characteristics,[72] of course, but it is the *inherited* ones that are of interest for the concept of evolution.[73]

[72] Such variation is most common with *our* species.

Not only do individuals vary in inherited traits; they vary in their *degree of similarity* (with inherited traits) relative to other individuals! *That* fact enables a *taxonomic* grouping of individuals into species (and varieties within a species), genuses, families, orders, classes, phyla, kingdoms, and domains. And the *taxonomic* groups themselves often have a *geographic* expression—in that, e.g., a given species may be associated ("naturally") with a certain geographic region.

Members of a given species have an ability to interbreed,[74] and in producing progeny produce offspring that (also) vary in *their* inherited traits. Were it not for this individual variation—*continuing* individual variation, in fact—evolution could not occur.

Let me immediately qualify this assertion, however, by noting that a distinction commonly made by evolutionary biologists is that between *small-scale* evolution and *large-scale* evolution.[75] The former involves minor changes—changes that occur as members of a species disperse into new areas, and adapt to those areas; or changes that occur within a given area as changes in that area (e.g., its physical environment) force the species to adapt (ignoring here the possibility of adaptation via migration!).[76] The latter type of evolution is more significant in that it involves the emergence of *new* species—with new structures, etc.

As we shall see shortly, Charles Darwin evidently perceived a *single* "mechanism"[77] operating in Nature—that of "natural selection"—and evidently believed[78] that natural selection brought about both types of evolution. I, however, place myself in that group that holds that (a) although selection mechanisms explain *small-scale* evolution, (b) other factors are involved with *large-scale* evolution. *What* those "other" factors might be is of no interest for the purposes of the present discussion, however; as a consequence, I do not pursue the matter further here.

Below, then, I (a) offer a definition of "natural selection"—i.e., I present *Darwin's* definition of the term; (b) offer a "translation" of that definition by an eminent (late) evolutionary biologist, and then comment on that "translation;" and (c) offer my own "translation" of Darwin.

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[73] If, that is, we ignore "Lamarckism," named for Jean-Baptiste Pierre Antoine de Monet, Chevalier de la Marck [1744 – 1829], who famously argued for the inheritance of acquired characteristics.

[74] Which is not to say that breeding cannot *also* occur at an inter-species level. Such breeding, however, is relatively rare.

[75] See, e.g., the Preface in Brian Goodwin, ." *How the Leopard Changed its Spots: The Evolution of Complexity*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994.

[76] Given what has been accomplished with breeding (e.g., with dogs), it is clear that a substantial amount of species change can be associated with small-scale evolution.

[77] An assertion that I will qualify shortly.

[78] The "tree of life" illustration that Darwin used in *The Origin of Species* (the *only* illustration that appears in the book) suggests as much.

2. Darwinian Natural Selection

It is not clear that Darwin gave "natural selection" a consistent meaning in *Origin*. I believe, however, that his basic, if not sole, meaning for the term is conveyed in the first paragraph of Chapter IV ("Natural Selection"), which I quote here in full:

> HOW will the struggle for existence, discussed too briefly in the last chapter [Chapter III, "Struggle for Existence"[79]], act in regard to variation? Can the principle of selection, which we have seen is so potent in the hands of man, apply in nature? I think we shall see that it can act most effectually. Let it be borne in mind in what an endless number of strange peculiarities our domestic productions, and, in a lesser degree, those under nature, vary; and how strong the hereditary tendency is. Under domestication, it may be truly said that the whole organisation becomes in some degree plastic. Let it be borne in mind how infinitely complex and close-fitting are the mutual relations of all organic beings to each other and to their physical conditions of life. Can it, then, be thought improbable, seeing that variations useful to man have undoubtedly occurred, that other variations useful in some way to each being in the great and complex battle of life, should sometimes occur in the course of thousands of generations? If such do occur, can we doubt (remem-
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> bering that many more individuals are born than can possibly survive) that individuals having any advantage, however slight, over others, would have the best chance of surviving and of procreating their kind? On the other hand, we may feel sure that any variation in the least degree injurious would be rigidly destroyed. This preservation of favourable variations and the rejection of injurious variations, I call Natural Selection. Variations neither useful nor injurious would not be affected by natural selection, and would be left a fluctuating element, as perhaps we see in the species called polymorphic.[80]

Granted that this paragraph does not contain a definition as commonly understood. However, this passage in *Origin* comes closest to providing a definition of "natural selection"—which is why I have quoted it in full here.

What was Darwin "saying" here? In "fleshing out" the meaning—*Darwin's* meaning, that is—of "natural selection" here, let me first attempt to derive Darwin's meaning from the term itself. An interpretation that seems reasonable, using this approach, is that Darwin thought of "natural selection" as that selection that occurred in Nature—as opposed to the selection exercised by breeders in their "artificial selection." Although one might be inclined to make such an

[79] The term "natural selection" first occurs in the Introduction to *Origin*, but is not "defined" until the first paragraph of Chapter IV.

[80] Charles Darwin, *On The Origin of Species By Means of Natural Selection*. London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1859, pp. 80 – 81. Available on the internet at:http://darwin-online.org.uk/EditorialIntroductions/Freeman_OntheOriginofSpecies.html Note here that the very *title* of Darwin's "classic" indicates the importance that he gave to "natural selection."

interpretation upon a casual encounter with the term, it is clear—from a reading of *Origin*—that that's *not* the meaning that Darwin intended for the term. Given that we know that *several* processes operate in Nature—and various passages in *Origin* indicate that Darwin knew this as well—it would seen foolish of us to think that Darwin thought of "natural selection" as some sort of *generic* process operating in Nature. Likewise, it would be foolish of us to believe that Darwin thought of "natural selection" as a *plural* term that encompassed the various processes operating in Nature; for given that different *processes* would be expected to have different *consequences* (a fact that Darwin surely recognized), it would be unwise—indeed, absurd—to so think of "natural selection."

How, then, *did* Darwin "define" natural selection? A puzzling fact that we must first recognize here is that although Darwin knew that several selection mechanisms operate in Nature, he used just two labels for selection mechanisms occurring in Nature—*Natural Selection* and *Sexual Selection*. Given this fact, the suggestion, seemingly, is that he (unwisely) lumped all processes other than the one(s) associated with Sexual Selection into a single category, and gave them the name natural selection. But is *that* what Darwin did? Some scholars seem to believe so (one would infer from their discussions of natural selection), but the paradox that seems, rather, to be the case is that although Darwin did not necessarily use "natural selection" in a consistent manner in *Origin* (within which the term occurs *frequently*, one must admit!), in the above passage he seems to have "defined" natural selection in such a manner that it referred to just *one* causative mechanism. We have, then, the odd fact that Darwin seemed to associate a *single* certain mechanism to natural selection, and another one to sexual selection (one with similarities with artificial selection, or breeding)—and in doing so excluded a number of other mechanism of which he was aware! I have no explanation for this peculiarity, and therefore will simply "pass over" it.

Let me next, then, present a "translation" of Darwin's "natural selection" offered by a noted evolutionary biologist, followed by some commentary on that "translation," *that* followed by my own "translation." Then, after presenting my perspective on human evolution (in the next section), I make some final comments on Darwin's "theory" of natural selection.

3. Mayr's "Translation"

The late Ernst Mayr [1904 – 2005] was one of the most respected names in evolutionary biology for many years; thus, his summary of Darwin's theory of [monotypic[81]] evolution should be taken seriously. It is as follows (except that I omit his graphics):

First, Darwin began by recognizing three "facts":

Fact 1. Populations tend to grow, and at an exponential rate.

[81] I have borrowed the terms "monotypic" and "polytypic" from William Tammone, "Competition, the Division of Labor, and Darwin's Principle of Divergence," *Journal of the History of Biology*, Vol. 28 (Spring 1995). Tammone used these terms on pages 116, 120, and 131. ("Monotypic" has roughly the same meaning as "small-scale," "polytypic" as "large-scale.") Parallel terms are (respectively) *anagenesis* and *cladogenesis*. See, e.g., Stephen Jay Gould, *Full House: The Spread of Excellence From Plato to Darwin*. New York: Harmony Books, 1996, p. 63.

Fact 2. (But) populations tend to remain stable in size.

Fact 3. There is a finite "carrying capacity" for a given species in a given area.

From these three "facts" Mayr claimed that Darwin derived:

Inference 1. A "struggle for existence among individuals" occurs.

Inference 2. There is differential survival; that is, some of those born die, others live (and later—some of them, at any rate—reproduce)—i.e., there is "**natural selection."**

This second inference, according to Mayr, was drawn from Inference 1, along with Facts (4) and (5), which are as follows:

Fact 4. Each individual is unique (i.e., there is population variability).

Fact 5. Much of the individual variation is heritable.

The above "facts" and "inferences" lead logically to Inference 3:

Inference 3. Over many generations the change in the given species is such that one can say that there has been [monotypic] evolution.

I assume that this is an accurate "translation" of Darwin's "theory" of natural selection, but will note several problems with Mayr's summary (and/or the "theory" that it summarizes):

- The meaning of "struggle for existence" is left ambiguous (as to precisely *what* it entails, and whether it is of an *intra-specific* nature[82] or, rather, involves *several* species).

- Mayr's Inference 2 fails to make clear the point that "differential survival" means that selectivity in (premature) deaths occur—i.e., the survivors (as a group) differ, genetically,[83] from the non-survivors. For only then does the occurrence of (premature) deaths have genetic significance. If, e.g., such deaths simply occur on a random basis, they have no genetic significance (i.e., they are inconsequential for the future genetic composition of the group in question, and changes in such).

- The conclusion (that I am imputing to him) that excess births will *inevitably* result in intra-specific competition ignores the very real possibility that, e.g., predation will be the primary factor acting to reduce the population to a "proper" size (i.e., carrying capacity level, or a somewhat lower level) rather than (or in addition to) intra-specific

[82] I assume that intra-specific competition was being referred to—both in Darwin's *Origin* and in Mayr's "translation."

[83] A word which was not, of course, in Darwin's vocabulary (although he seemed to possess the *concept* involved). The term itself was coined in 1909 by Danish botanist Wilhelm Johannsen [1857 – 1927].

competition. Evidently Mayr was not aware of the "definition" of "Ecology" that some ecologists would give: "Ecology is about who eats whom."

- Even if predation is not involved, excess births need not result in intra-specific competition; they could, rather, simply result, e.g., in death via starvation.

- The "theory" proceeds as if the environment was non-existent!—or at least was not relevant as an explanatory factor.

4. My Version

Following, finally, is *my* interpretation of the above Darwin passage:

1. The "selection" in "natural selection" refers to a *process*—a process of temporal *change* in a given species (i.e., monotypic evolution)—and a *single* process rather than a group of processes.

2. The "natural" in "natural selection" suggests that Darwin was asserting that the process in question occurred in the real world—was not just of a hypothetical nature. That is, the "natural" suggests that natural selection has an empirical basis. (Which does not necessarily mean that natural selection can be *observed*, but at least can be *inferred* from observational data.)

3. The fact that Darwin perceived a similarity between "artificial selection" (i.e., breeding—given attention in his Chapter I, "Variation Under Domestication"), combined with the fact that breeding results in the intensification of some trait(s)—one(s) chosen by the breeder—*clearly* suggests that Darwin thought of natural selection as resulting in (comparable) *directionality* with a certain variable(s).

4. The "selection" in "natural selection" suggests that reference was being made not only to a process, but a process that was *selective* (rather than random); i.e., the "selected" individuals (as a group) had more of the given variable (the one involved in directionality) than the individuals not "selected." (Which implies, of course, that individuals of a given species differ one from another in various respects.)

5. Although with "artificial selection" the causal agent is humans choosing, the cause of "natural selection" is intra-specific competition.

6. *That* competition results *not* from an innate tendency to engage in competitive behavior but, rather, from the "pressure" exerted by "excess" births. (That is, the cause is *situational* rather than *genetic*—although over time the latter can become dominant, as aggressiveness might be expected to become more prominent as an inherited trait. Which means that although "in the beginning" a certain *physical* trait may give one an advantage

in competition with one's conspecifics, over time this factor may be joined by the *behavioral* trait of aggressiveness.)

7. Given that the selectivity *must* be thought of as resulting in directionality with one or more variables (physical *and* behavioral), to be comparable with artificial selection, the suggestion is that (a) *acquired* characteristics play no role in the "selection" process. In addition, the suggestion is that (b) all possible causal factors *in addition to* natural selection (e.g., environmental change, predation, etc.) are being "held constant"[84]—so that they can have no causal efficacy.

8. The "fact" that acquired traits play no role in survival/non-survival suggests that the intra-specific competition occurs only with the just-born (whose characteristics are *only* attributable to biological inheritance—if we assume away the possibility of certain characteristics being acquired after conception, but while still in the womb).

9. *That* fact suggests, in turn, that the just-born are "on their own" from birth—regardless of the species under consideration.

10. The "survival of the fittest" phrase (first used by Darwin in this paragraph in the fifth edition of *Origin*) should be understood as meaning "survival of those individuals that fit the given environment *and also*–Indeed, *principally*—are "winners" in the intra-specific competition that occurs—being winners because they have certain inherited traits that give them a competitive advantage.

More implicit assumptions in Darwin's discussion of natural selection could be identified, but enough has been made explicit above to allow us to conclude that *if*[85] (a) the above were to occur year after year, (b) we were to determine the average value for the "success" variable for survivors each year, (c) were to plot those values on a graph, and (d) then connect the resulting points with a line, the line would be upward-sloping (or downward-sloping, as the case might be).[86] Which fact would "tell" us that directionality had occurred: slow, steady, "progressive" change. Darwin would have added that certain other variables might have been correlated with the "success" variable(s), and would therefore also exhibit the same kind of change.

I noted above (under point 10) that Darwin did not use the phrase "survival of the fittest" in the first edition of *Origin*, but first used it in the fifth (1869) edition—which he did upon the

[84] As if one were conducting an experiment!

[85] The "if" here is important (and therefore italicized) because what Darwin actually presented was a *model*, not a *theory*. This is not the place, however, to specify how the one differs from the other.

[86] It would *not* depict the *step-like* change associated with Stephen Jay Gould's [1941 – 2002] "punctuated equilibria." Rather, the line would be (strictly speaking) a *straight* one (although it could also, logically, be a curved one).

recommendation of Alfred Russel Wallace [1823 – 1913], who "invented" the "theory" of natural selection at about the same time as had Darwin. I should add that Darwin borrowed the "survival of the fittest" phrase from his contemporary Herbert Spencer [1820 – 1903], who had first used the phrase in *The Principles of Biology*, Vol. 1.[87]

The phrase first appears in Chapter XII ("Indirect Equilibration") of Part III ("The Evolution of Life") of Spencer's book, on p. 444. The paragraph preceding the use of the "survival of the fittest" phrase refers to the fact that individuals of a species would vary in their characteristics (whether inherited or acquired is not specified), and then brings in a reference to "a particular incident force" and "change in the environment" which would "affect more or less differently the slightly different moving equilibria which the members of the species present. It cannot but happen that some will be more stable than others, when exposed to this new or altered factor . . . and that those will survive whose functions happen to be most nearly in equilibrium with the modified aggregate of external forces."

Spencer's next paragraph then begins: "But this survival of the fittest, implies multiplication of the fittest . . . And by the continual destruction of the individuals that are the least capable of maintaining their equilibria in [the] presence of this new incident force, there must eventually be arrived at an altered type completely in equilibrium with the altered conditions."

What Spencer seems to have been referring to here was the incidence of *environmental change*, with the given species *adapting* to that change by a process of selective survival.[88] That is, those individuals that best fit the changing environment would survive, and later (some of them, at any rate) reproduce, those lacking a "fit" with the changing environment would die (and therefore *not* produce any progeny). The species would therefore change, *but only as long as the environment changed*—and provided that the environment changed slowly enough to allow the species to adapt. Note the absence of any reference to intra-specific competition in Spencer's discussion.

Spencer made reference to Darwin's *Origin* on p. 445, and quoted the "'natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life'" statement from *Origin*. In discussing natural selection as used by *Darwin*, there is, however, no hint in Spencer's discussion that he (Spencer) recognized the role that competition played in Darwin's thinking. In addition, Spencer revealed his attachment to Lamarckism[89] in his statement (p. 449) that "there is a moiety of the phenomena which this key [Darwin's natural selection] will not unlock. Mr Darwin himself recognizes use and disuse of parts, as causes of modifications in organisms; and does this, indeed, to a greater extent than do some who accept his general conclusion. But I conceive that

[87] London: Williams and Norgate, 1864. The book can be downloaded from http://books.google.com/books/ It should be unnecessary to note here—but I will anyway!—that ideas regarding evolution existed before the writings of Darwin and Wallace were prepared and published, and that Spencer had begun to publish his ideas regarding evolution in the early 1850s.

[88] Members of a species can also, of course, "adapt" to environmental change by migrating!

[89] Named after Jean-Baptiste Pierre Antoine de Monet, Chevalier de la Marck [1744 – 1829], who argued for the inheritance of acquired characteristics. I should note that Darwin himself, although associated especially with a "genetic" view of inheritance, never freed himself completely from Lamarckism.

he does not recognize them to a sufficient extent . . . I think [that] he leaves unconsidered a mass of morphological phenomena that are explicable as results of functionally-acquired modifications, transmitted and increased, and which are not explicable as results of natural selection."

If Spencer lacked a clear grasp of the meaning that Darwin attached to natural selection, an additional irony is that *Darwin*, in turn, seemed not to understand how Spencer had used "survival of the fittest" in his (Spencer's) 1864 book! It seems reasonably clear that Darwin associated (intra-specific) competition with natural selection, and also clear that Spencer did *not* associate such competition with his "survival of the fittest"! Why, then, did Darwin choose to use the phrase in the fifth edition of *Origin*? The term "fittest" in the phrase suggests that reference was being made to fitting the environment—and that's exactly what Spencer had in mind. Darwin's use of the phrase—as a virtual substitute for natural selection—makes it *appear* that *he* (Darwin) thought of natural selection as resulting in fitting the environment. But such is true only in an incidental sense. It is reasonably clear that Darwin thought of intra-specific competition as the "motor" which drove natural selection, the result being not only directionality, but directionality that would continue on *indefinitely*. The individuals that survived would, of course, need to fit the environment—which in Darwin's case was tacitly assumed to be spatially homogeneous, as well as unchanging temporally; but the main point with Darwin was that only those able to win in intra-specific competition would survive (and later reproduce), this process occurring year after year producing directionality that would continue on through time indefinitely.

It is not at all clear, then, why Darwin (upon the advice of Wallace) chose to think of "survival of the fittest" as having the same meaning as natural selection; and in doing so, Darwin has confused many a reader, who have insisted on giving a Spencerian, rather than Darwinian, meaning to natural selection—and, with Darwin, have equated "survival of the fittest" and "natural selection."

5. Natural Selection Elsewhere in Darwin

The Origin of Species was not the only book that Darwin wrote, but of those other books, the only one that dealt exclusively with humans was his *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*.[90] The question that arises, then, regarding *that* book is what role—if any—natural selection plays in it. And the answer is that the term is used frequently in *Descent* (e.g., on p. 173 it is used three times and "struggle for existence" is used twice), and given the same basic meaning as in Origin. For example, on p. 173 we find: "Natural selection follows from the struggle for existence; and this from a rapid rate of increase."

However, whereas in *Origin* the natural selection that was occurring was seemingly happening as a result of competition between *individuals* of a species, in *Descent* the competition is primarily

[90] New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1871, (Vol. 1). The book can be downloaded from this site: http://books.google.com/books?id=ZvsHAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=descent+of+man,+1871&hl=en&ei=id1ZTffoHcO_tgfVhrzRCw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1&ved=0CC0Q6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=descent%20of%20man%2C%201871&f=false

between *groups*. Darwin noted that (p. 155) "the ape-like progenitors of man" were "social"[91] (i.e., tended to live in groups), and therefore "must have acquired the same instinctive feelings which impel other animals to live in a body [i.e., group]. . . ." He added (pp. 155 – 156) that they "would have felt uneasy when separated from their comrades, for whom they would have felt some degree of love; they would have warned each other of danger, and have given mutual aid in attack or defence." And having such behavioral characteristics (p. 156) "implies some degree of sympathy, fidelity, and courage." How were these attributes acquired? They "were no doubt acquired by the progenitors of man in a similar manner [as with "lower animals"], namely, through natural selection, aided by inherited habit." (Precisely *how* that mechanism worked to bring about those traits was not, however, explained by Darwin.)

Darwin noted (p. 130) that "Man has spread widely over the face of the earth, and must have been exposed, during his incessant migrations, to the most diversified conditions." Thus, as their habitat changed in character as they moved from place to place, early humans were forced to change their habits. Darwin did not specify whether this occurred through a process of selection or of learning, but implied the former (p. 131): "The early progenitors of man must . . . have tended, like all other animals, to have increased beyond their means of subsistence; they must therefore occasionally have been exposed to a struggle for existence, and consequently to the rigid law of natural selection. Beneficial variations of all kinds will thus, either occasionally or habitually, have been preserved, and injurious ones eliminated."

Darwin added that as the early humans spread over the earth, (p. 131) "all others have yielded before him." Meaning, presumably, that other species that might act as competitors would be displaced in the process. What gave humans an ability to do this? Man (p. 131) "manifestly owes this immense superiority to his intellectual faculties, his social habits, which lead him to aid and defend his fellows, and to his corporeal structure." The (pp. 131 – 132) "supreme importance of these characters has been proved by the final arbitrament of the battle for life."

Darwin credited man's development of (p. 132) "articulate language" as having especial importance for his "advancement": "Through his powers of intellect, articulate language has been evolved; and on this his wonderful advancement has mainly depended." Man has invented weapons, tools, traps; has made rafts and canoes; has discovered "the art of making fire, by which hard and stringy roots can be rendered digestible, and poisonous roots or herbs innocuous." Etc. These (p. 132) "several inventions, by which man in the rudest state has become so preeminent, are the direct result of the development of his powers of observation, memory, curiosity, imagination, and reason." Darwin "explained" these developments by asserting (p. 154) that "It is . . . highly probable that with mankind the intellectual faculties have been gradually perfected through natural selection; and this conclusion is sufficient for our purpose." But is it? Is the glib assertion that natural selection was responsible for these developments sufficient, given that no explanation was offered for *precisely* how natural selection "worked its magic"?!

The intellectual (and related) development that occurred with early humans did not occur evenly—it occurred more in some groups than others. Those which had "progressed" the most

[91] On p. 154 Darwin stated: "It deserves notice that as soon as the progenitors of man became social (and this probably occurred at a very early period) . . . ."

in this regard had the advantage in their competition with other groups, and Darwin ostensibly believed that conflict between early human groups occurred as a matter of course; e.g., on p. 156 he referred to "the never-ceasing wars of savages . . . ." In these wars the more advanced group tended to be victorious over less-advanced groups. And Darwin added (p. 154)—with seeming approval—that: "At the present day civilized nations are everywhere supplanting barbarous nations, excepting where the climate opposes a deadly barrier; and they succeed mainly, though not exclusively, through their arts, which are the products of the intellect." And he added: "It is, therefore, highly probable that with mankind the intellectual faculties have been gradually perfected through natural selection . . . ." But precisely *how*, Darwin didn't bother to explain. He added, however, that as this process continued, (p. 156) "the social and moral qualities would tend slowly to advance and be diffused throughout the world."

What Darwin seemed to label as "social" and "moral" qualities were those traits—such as loyalty, a willingness to help others, courage—that would help a group (p. 156) "cohere," and thereby allow them to act as an effective group in doing battle with other (less-developed) human groups. Thus, the "cohesion" that Darwin prized, with a human group, solely functioned for *defensive* and *offensive* purposes. And this cohesion developed within a group because members came to recognize that if one (p. 157) "aided [in a battle situation] his fellow-men, he would commonly receive aid in return. From this low motive he might acquire the habit of aiding his fellows [in a battle situation]; and the habit of performing benevolent actions certainly strengthens the feeling of sympathy, which gives the first impulse to benevolent actions. Habits, moreover, followed during many generations probably tend to be inherited." (How does *this* occur?!)

Darwin added (p. 157): "But there is another and much more powerful stimulus to the development of social virtues, namely, the praise and the blame of our fellow-men." These are due to the "instinct of sympathy," and (p. 158) "this instinct no doubt was originally acquired, like all the other social instincts, through natural selection." A glib statement if ever there was one!

Although Darwin referred to the Golden Rule (e.g., on pp. 102 and 159, it is clear in *Descent* that he believed that "some people are more equal than others" and, therefore, deserve to be treated differently. He noted that (p. 161) natural selection worked well *within* "savage" societies in that "With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated; and those that survive commonly exhibit a vigorous state of health." But in a seemingly complaining spirit[92] he then added (pp. 161 – 162): "We civilized men, on the other hand, do our utmost to check the process of elimination; we build asylums for the imbecile, the maimed, and the sick; we institute poor-laws; and our medical mean exert their utmost skill to save the life of every one to the last moment. There is reason to believe that vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to small-pox. Thus the weak [and worthless!] members of civilized societies propagate their kind. No one who has attended to the breeding of domestic animals will doubt that this must be highly injurious to the race of man." Yes, indeed!!

However, Darwin reveals that he is conflicted regarding the matter of how we should treat others. On the one hand he stated (p. 162) that: "The aid which we feel impelled to give to the

[92] Evidently he was not familiar with Matthew 25!!

helpless is mainly an incidental result of the instinct of sympathy, which was originally acquired as part of the social instincts, but subsequently rendered . . . more tender and more widely diffused. Nor could we check our sympathy, if so urged by hard reason, without deterioration in the noblest part of our nature." If "we were intentionally to neglect the weak and the helpless, it could only be for a contingent benefit, with a certain and great present evil. Hence we must bear without complaining the undoubtedly bad effects of the weak surviving and propagating their kinds . . . ."

On the other hand, however, Darwin seemed to gain some sense of relief—or is it satisfaction?!—from certain "checks" that operate in "civilized" societies (p. 165 – 166): "In regard to the moral qualities [at least, and ignoring intellectual ones for the moment], some elimination of the worst dispositions is always in progress even in the most civilized nations. Malefactors are executed, or imprisoned for long periods, so that they cannot freely transmit their bad qualities. Melancholic and insane persons are confined, or commit suicide. Violent and quarrelsome men often come to a bloody end. Restless men who will not follow any steady occupation—and this relic of barbarism is a great check to civilization—emigrate to newly-settled countries [[93]], where they prove useful pioneers." The intemperate tend to die young; profligate women "bear few children, and profligate men rarely marry; both suffer from disease."

Thus, Darwin believed not only that natural selection had played a major role in human evolution—just as it had in the evolution of every other species—but that natural selection had had both positive and negative consequences. And although we should have regrets for the latter, we should recognize that there *are* checks that help reduce the deleterious effects of the negative consequences, the main point to recognize is that (p. 173) "Had he [i.e., humankind] not been subjected to natural selection, assuredly he would never have attained to the rank of manhood"—i.e., his current advanced state.

6. Why I Eschew Referring to "Natural Selection"

Let me now indicate why—from a scientific standpoint[94]—the term "natural selection" should be expunged from discussions of human evolution:

- Darwin based—via the use of deduction—his "explanation" of (monotypic) species-change on Rev.[95] Thomas Malthus's [1766 – 1834] "law" of excess births.

[93] On p. 173 Darwin stated: "There is apparently much truth in the belief that the wonderful progress of the United States, as well as the character of the people, are the results of natural selection; the more energetic, restless, and courageous men from all parts of Europe having emigrated during the last ten or twelve generations to that great country, and having there succeeded best."

[94] Insofar as the claim—supposedly with a "scientific" basis—that competition is a law of nature came to be applied in a *social* context—in the form of "Social Darwinism"—this claim has not only been untrue but damaging: it has enabled people to excuse their *evil* behavior, on the one hand, and excuse their failing to engage in *helpful* behaviors, on the other hand.

[95] A "Christian" minister—or so it is claimed.

Unfortunately, that "law" is *not* a law in the sense of a "true" universal statement. Therefore, Darwin's conclusion that intra-specific competition is a "law of nature," although a *valid* conclusion (i.e., one that is logically derivable from Malthus's "law"[96]), is a *false* one. It is that fact which may have led William Irvine to make the astute observation that: "Darwin had not so much proved that natural selection *does* occur as that it *must* occur."[97]

- Because of the manner in which Darwin obtained his "law," evidently he believed that it was not necessary to provide *empirical evidence* in support of the "law"—and thus never did.

- No subsequent empirical research has established that intra-specific competition is a law of nature. In fact, between September 1890 and June 1896 Prince—and geographer—Peter Kropotkin [1842 – 1921] published a series of articles in *The Nineteenth Century* that offered evidence of cooperation, rather, in nature (which articles were published in book form—*Mutual Aid*—in 1902). (The articles were written in response to Thomas H. Huxley's [1825 – 1895] "The Struggle for Existence in Human Society," published in the February 1888 issue of *The Nineteenth Century*.[98] Some editions of Kropotkin's book include a copy of the Huxley article.)[99]

- Nor, indeed, has empirical research established that evolutionary change has been slow, steady, and progressive. The "progressive" part of the prediction has realism in that the general trend has been toward increasing complexity. And although "slow" and "steady" would seem to have realism from a *small-scale* standpoint, they definitely lack in realism

[96] Although Darwin's conclusion is logically derivable from Malthus's "law," it is not the *only* possible conclusion that can be so derived. As I indicated earlier, the "excess" births could also, e.g., be "handled" via predation—to the degree, in fact, that no "pressure" for intra-specific competition would exist.

[97] *Apes, Angels, and Victorians: Darwin, Huxley, and Evolution*. With new Introduction by Sir Julian Huxley. New York: Time Incorporated, 1963, p. 129. First published by McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1955.

[98] In this article Huxley wrote that animal life was characterized by conflict with conspecifics and that, likewise, early human society was "a continual free fall," with a "Hobbesian war of each against all . . . ." Thomas Hobbes was born in 1588 and died in 1679. His famous book, *Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil,* was published in 1651.

[99] See also Robert Augros and George Stanciu, *The New Biology: Discovering the Wisdom in Nature*. Boston: New Science Library, 1987; and Alfie Kohn, *No Contest: The Case Against Competition*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 19865.

from a *large-scale* standpoint; rather, the evidence is clear that at the latter scale change tends to be step-like.

- The above is not to say that natural selection has not occurred with *some* species. However, my focus here is on the *human* species, and it is unlikely that natural selection played much of a role in human evolution—or *any* role, for that matter. The factors, rather, that seem to have played a role in human evolution are the following, and it those factors to which I make reference in the discussion that follows:

    - Environmental change[100]
    - Predation[101]
    - Sexual selection[102]

Let me conclude this section by noting that Robert Augros and George Stanciu have presented a very succinct critique of Darwin's "theory" of natural selection: All of "Darwin's premises are defective: there is no unlimited population growth in natural populations, no competition between individuals, and no new species producible by selecting for varietal differences. And if Darwin's premises are faulty, then his conclusion [of slow, steady, progressive change] does not follow."[103]

B. The Explanatory Factors of Relevance

As the sources that I have cited above (among others) indicate, the factors that have been decisive in human evolution have been (a) environmental change, (b) predation, and (c) sexual selection. As my intent here is other than to discuss human evolution, I will keep this section extremely short, and note simply that in discussing human evolution, there is no need to bring in the factor of natural selection. Indeed, it is a mistake—commonly made, one must admit—to bring the factor into the discussion for the simple reason that there is no reason to believe that it played a role in human evolution!

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[100] See especially Stephen M. Stanley, *Children of the Ice Age: How a Global Catastrophe Allowed Humans to Evolve*. New York: Harmony Books, 1996.

[101] See especially Donna Hart and Robert W. Sussman, *Man the Hunted: Primates, Predators, and Human Evolution.* New York: Westview Press, 2005.

[102] See, e.g., Mariette Nowak, *Eve's Rib: A Revolutionary New View of the Female*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980; Nancy Makepeace Tanner, *On Becoming Human*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981; and Adrienne Zihlman, "The Paleolithic Glass Ceiling: Women in Human Evolution," in (pp. 91 – 113) *Women in Human Evolution*, edited by Lori D.Hager. London: Routledge, 1997.

[103] *The New Biology: Discovering the Wisdom in Nature*. Boston, MA: New Science Library, 1988, p. 160.

What seemed to initiate the process of human evolution was climatic change associated with the Ice Age (described in the Stanley book cited above). This change brought about vegetational changes in Africa which, in turn, meant that our ancestors were faced with a changing habitat. Our ancestors had been tree dwellers primarily, but the thinning of forests in Africa forced our ancestors out of the trees, thereby exposing them to predators. As they adapted—via selection mechanisms—to the new situation, they changed both physically and behaviorally (as Hart and Sussman note in the book cited above). In addition, sexual selection came to play a role—but in the form of "female choice" sexual selection. That is, females—the ones willing to care for their young[104]—became "fussy" regarding who they mated with, and tended to choose, as mates, those males who would provide them with food and protection.

As a consequence of the particular selection mechanisms that *did* shape human development—with predation and sexual selection having particular importance—humans came to be "good natured."[105] In asserting that, I need immediately to qualify it by stating that humans did not evolve *independently* of a way of life but, rather, evolved *in conjunction* with one; one that was initially centered on gathering, with trapping and hunting (and consequent meat-eating) added much later.[106]

The importance of *that* point is that when humankind began on the road to "civilization," people had certain biological traits (physical and behavioral) and tended to retain those traits while civilization was "progressing." Given that humans had not been "designed" for civilized existence, the rise of civilization meant a growing discrepancy between (a) the way of life people had been "designed" for and (b) the way of life they were forced to live. Because human biology remained basically the same over time, there grew an ever-widening Discrepancy—and one could argue (but I will not do so here) that virtually all of the problems we humans face at present are attributable to this Discrepancy. And one could also argue that the obstacles that we now face in achieving the Good Society are all "man made" (in the literal sense of being blamable on males!), but with males having the excuse that *they*, in turn, can blame The Discrepancy! What are those obstacles? Let us next identify them.

C. Obstacles (Actual Ones!) to the Good Society

Not only do the obstacles to a Good Society *not* lie in our genes. The *opposite* is true in the sense that the Good Society is *latent* in our genes. For that latency to be released, realized, however, we need—for one thing—to become aware of the real obstacles that lie in our path. Other considerations will be given brief attention in the Conclusion section, but at this point I wish to identify some of the human-made obstacles that frustrate creation of a Good Society. I

[104] Ones not so willing would, of course, leave no descendants!

[105] The allusion here is to Frans de Waal, *Good Natured: The Origin of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996. See also, e.g., Dacher Keltner, *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009.

[106] Factors that enabled this development were not only developments in tools/weapons, but developments in dentition and in the ability to use fire for cooking (thereby making meat digestible).

make no claim that the list provided here is complete. Let me begin here with a brief critique of our society:

> [The United States is] a society that upholds barely veiled megalomania as its most exalted ideal—a society that exhorts its citizens to spurn the fulfillment of their essential humanity and to crave, instead, superhuman glory. Yes, the most influential ideologies of American cultural history have offered us beguiling paths to delusion; beguiling, because each has tendered its invitation to limitless egoism under the guise of a dedication to high social ideals.[107]

This is a rather damning indictment of our society (!), but Dr. Sarnoff was simply trying to express his honest perception of our society.

I have organized my list into four categories: one's situation, common practices, governing ideas, and ignorance.

1. <u>One's Situation</u>

- Our society is structured (e.g., private property, nuclear family, emphasis on rights, etc.) such that when one "comes of age," one must "enter the world" and become employed. Given that a "success" mentality is a driving force in our society, one finds oneself in a situation such that one must either seek employment or start one's own business. In either case the degree of one's "success" will depend heavily on one's family background (e.g., one's parents income and education)—for this will play a huge role in the education one receives and the opportunities that become available. It also, of course, depends on one's abilities, interests, personality, etc. Inevitably, most will become "unsuccessful," with some becoming more "successful" than others. Thus, one may very well develop an inferiority complex, and "compensate" for these feelings by becoming centered on one's self (rather than others), or (in some cases) by even "striking out" at others, thereby inflicting psychological and/or physical harm on others.

  Compensatory behavior can also be innocuous, of course, in that one may, e.g., become a sports fanatic—so that virtually all of one's "off" time is spent either in participating in a sport (e.g., golf) or becoming a spectator (of baseball, basketball, football, etc.). As a, e.g., sports fanatic, one may not engage in hurtful behaviors (except, perhaps, "keying" cars of the fans of opposing teams!), but also may not do much good either—so "possessed" is one with one's obsession. Likely also, one does not take one's duties as a citizen very seriously.

- If one "achieves" some measure of success, and occupies a supervisory or managerial position, one may find that one's duties virtually require one to be

[107] Irving Sarnoff, *Society With Tears*. New York: The Citadel Press, 1966, p. 35.

unethical in how one treats one's employees. Ironically, this may cause one feelings of guilt, and one compensates for those feelings by, e.g., making a conscious effort to be "nice" to one's neighbors. Thus, the one who does "good" need not be a person who is doing so for the best motives!

- If one is an executive, a question that arises is: Is the evil that one does attributable to one's position or, rather, has one striven to attain an executive position because one is inclined to do evil? Both factors are likely involved; but what is beyond question is that evil is associated with executive positions.

  In the case of government officials (whether in the executive or legislative branches) it is common that those in decision-making positions engage in actions that benefit corporations and the rich, seek to "fix" elections in other countries, seek to assassinate leaders in other countries (if "only" character assassinations), and start wars. For an excellent discussion of this topic see William Blum, *Killing Hope*.[108] Blum has a web site (www.killinghope.org) and presents periodic updates on this excellent (if highly disturbing!) web site.

  In the case of corporate officials it is common that those in executive positions strive to pay low wages, to resist union-formation and engage in union busting if the former efforts are unsuccessful (e.g., through threatening to send jobs overseas and/or actually doing so), offer little in the way of benefits, produce shoddy products, offer unsafe working conditions, lobby government officials to get what they want (e.g., of a regulatory and taxation nature), misinform the public (in the case of media executives), and even make decisions that cause economic collapse. For a recent discussion of relevance see this one by Paul Craig Roberts, a former member of the Reagan administration (Assistant Secretary of the Treasury): http://www.counterpunch.org/roberts02182011.html.

- One may be poor, have a handicap, etc., so that even if one would like to do good, finds doing so difficult. Unfortunately, if one is extremely poor, one may engage in hurtful behaviors—e.g., robbery, burglary—out of a sense of desperation.

- One may be a sadist, perhaps because of unfortunate experiences while one was developing, and therefore be inclined toward hurtful behaviors, and have no inclination whatsoever to engage in helpful behaviors.

2. Common Practices

- Child-rearing practices in this country often result in individuals who lack much of a sense of empathy for others. Were the practices reported in Jean Liedloff's

[108] Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 1995 (but updated since then).

The Continuum Concept[109] widely used in our society, this might have a huge impact on behavior in this society.

- The games and sports that are by far the most common in our society are *competitive* ones. As such, they help "train" people for life in our society—although few in our society view these games/sports that way. The fact of the matter is that there are many cooperative games/sports (if one "Googles," one will have thousands of "hits"), and if these were more popular, behavior in our society likely would be very different. One can argue, though, that given that our society "needs" there to be competitive games and sports, the only way for cooperative games/sports to become popular is through substantial societal system change!

3. Governing Ideas (in the Society)

- One of the governing ideas in our society is that happiness comes primarily from the consumption of goods and services. Thus, given that one "naturally" wants to be as happy as possible, one strives to obtain (legally, the society's leaders hope!) as much in the way of consumables as possible. Not only may this striving result in harm to others; given one's desire to be as happy as possible, one will *not* be motivated to give to others—for doing so would detract from *one's own* level of happiness.

- Many in our society are convinced that our society is a meritocracy—meaning that what one gets is what one *deserves*. Given that, e.g., the poor are getting what *they* deserve, one feels no need to help them in any way—and one doesn't.

- One may feel superior to others—either as an individual, or as a member of some "favored" group (such as being an American, a white, a white with British ancestry, etc.). Such a feeling enables one to treat "inferiors" badly, such as exploiting them.

- One may regard one's belief system—such as a religious one—as the only correct one, and regard those who fail to accept it as heretics. As such, one feels justified in persecuting such people—perhaps even to the point of death.

- One's thinking may be governed by certain biological ideas, and one may therefore think of people in terms of being "fit" or "unfit." Although one may feel no inclination to "do" for one's fellow "fit" humans, one may do what one can to eliminate the "unfit"—and feel perfectly justified in doing so. After all, Nature has certain laws, and we humans must not "interfere" with them.

[109] Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 1977. See this site for more information: http://www.continuum-concept.org.

- If one is convinced that humans are, "by nature," competitive-aggressive, one may be inclined to be aggressive—and thereby hurtful—in one's relationships with others, and have no inclination at all to engage in helpful behaviors.

- If one believes that humans are "naturally" selfish, one may use this as an excuse to, oneself, engage in "giving" sorts of behaviors. The only "plus" here is that one may not be inclined to engage in hurtful behaviors.

4. Ignorance

- One may fail to do good, not because one lacks a desire so to do, but because one lacks knowledge about the neediness that exists "out there." The fault for this may lie partly with oneself, but there is also a good basis for blaming the media for not providing viewers/listeners with such information.

- An interesting possibility in this realm was suggested by University of Wisconsin sociologist Edward A. Ross over a century ago[110]—the idea that codes of conduct become obsolete over time as societal conditions change; which suggests that one may engage in hurtful behavior without realizing it—because the moral code by which one lives has not caught up with societal changes.

D. Conclusions

It is important to recognize that the obstacles to achieving the Good Society lie *not* in our genes[111] but, rather, human-created (if but unintentionally) factors, such as the ones listed in the previous section. If we are to achieve the Good Society (assuming that such is possible), knowledge of such factors is important, but we must also (a) develop ideas as to what individual traits should be common in that society, (b) the characteristics that the society should have (i.e., its "shape"), and (c) implementable ideas regarding how to get there—i.e., who/what organizations should provide the leadership, and what steps should be taken. It may not be possible to achieve the Good Society; my fear, though, is that if we don't (and those in other societies don't either), our species may be extinct before the century is out: "Global warming" is not to be taken lightly, but we are doing so anyway.[112]

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[110] *Sin and Society: An Analysis of Latter-Day Iniquity*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers,1973. With a letter by Theodore Roosevelt, and an Introduction to the Torchbook Edition by Julius Weinberg. Originally published in 1907 by Houghton, Mifflin and Company.

[111] I am alluding here to Richard C. Lewontin, Steven Rose, and Leon J. Kamin, *Not in Our Genes: Biology, Ideology, and Human Nature*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.

[112] To be more forthright about this matter, the corporate elite—the large energy companies in particular—have most of the power in our society (the world, for that matter!), and these individuals are guided by short-run *profit* considerations rather than long-run *survival* ones.

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Moving to the Right

Alton C. Thompson

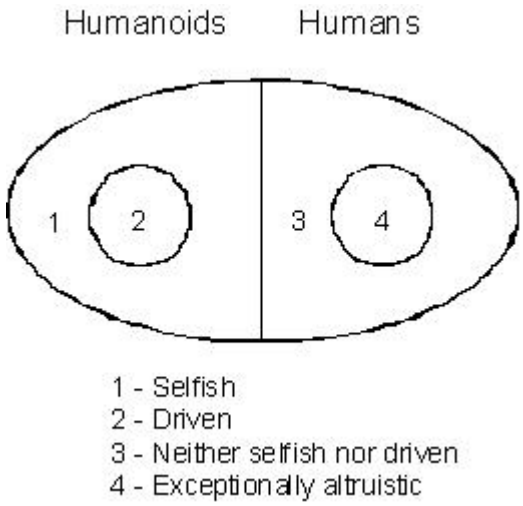
The late [1937 – 2002] Viola F. Cordova—a Jicarilla Apache/Hispanic philosopher—has asserted that humans are born "'humanoid,' that is with the capacity to become 'fully human' through the exercise of all of their faculties." "Intelligence" is one of those faculties, but so are the emotions—"for example, guilt, which calls us to rectify what is wrong, and sympathy and empathy, which call us to be aware of the other as someone like one's self. Humans have many qualities that must be fostered for one to become fully human." And we have a broader range of capabilities than other creatures, by virtue of our "physical structure: our ability to walk upright, our easily manipulated hands, our stereoscopic vision with a broad color range, our ability to adapt to a variety of geographical environments, our ability to respond to our environment with awe, reverence, or even fear."

Upon birth, thus, we have tremendous potential; but when we are born, we are merely "humanoids" until—and unless—we develop those potentials. Or, more precisely, those potentials lay latent in us, awaiting a *fostering environment*. The provision of such an environment is the responsibility of the group into which the birth occurs—a "group that teaches the new being what it is to be human in *this* group of beings." For given that different groups occupy different ecological niches, each group of humans will have its own way of "being human."

"In many tribes the new being is not seen as fully human until he or she is five to eight years old (many official naming ceremonies take place at this time). It is at that age that a human being can discern the consequences of his actions on others. He is taught to be human by showing him that he is one human among others. Because he shares the world with other beings, there is an emphasis on cooperation rather than competition; sharing rather than accumulation."[113]

What Dr. Cordova's discussion here suggests to me is a framework for perceiving *societies*:

[113] Kathleen Dean Moore, Kurt Peters, Ted Jojola, and Amber Lacy, eds., *The Native American Philosophy of V. F. Cordova*. With Foreword by Linda Hogan. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press, 2007, pp. 152 – 153.



(Cautions: In interpreting this figure one should keep in mind that no meaning should be attached to the relative sizes of the four areas; and that although the figure may suggest that homogeneity exists within each of the four areas identified, in actuality the expectation is that variability, rather, would be the rule. Note that the figure asserts that if one is driven, one will also, necessarily, be selfish.)

What the above figure "states" is that any given society can be conceived as potentially containing four types of people (adults) from the perspective of the two "dimensions," (a) selfishness—altruism and (b) drivenness—non-drivenness. (Note that by "drivenness" I am referring to being driven by a desire to *acquire*—wealth and/or power and/or fame. Furthermore, I assume that "drivenness" is a form of what might be termed "possession.")

Although Dr. Cordova evidently applied the label "humanoid" only to youth (under the assumption that any First Nation youth would have an environment that virtually guaranteed that s/he would become a human), I make no such assumption here. Rather, although I assume that in a First Nation society (of, say, 1500 CE) virtually all adult members would be in Category 3, in our society today one would find individuals in all four categories. (I will not, though, make any guess as to how many—from a percent standpoint—are in each category.) What is to be noted, however, is that I assert regarding Category 1 and 2 individuals that they are *humanoids*, with only Category 3 and 4 individuals being *humans* (as conceived by Dr. Cordova).

If asked to rank the three categories from the standpoint of *desirability*, I would do so thusly: 3, 4, 1, 2. That is, it seems to me most desirable for the members in a society to be in Category 3—neither driven nor selfish. There is nothing objectionable about Category 4 people—indeed, such individuals are rightly admired. Still, there is something "unnatural" about such people—which is why I give them a second-place ranking. Thus, just as Category 2 individuals can be said to be "possessed," so can Category 4 people, in their own way: both can be understood as having pathologies.

I put Category 2 people in last place because, in being both selfish and driven, the latter will tend to behave in ways that are *exploitative* relative to others. Category 1 people, although they lack a motivation to *help* others, at least do not act to *harm* others. Category 2 individuals, however, in being driven, are so oriented to *self* that they are oblivious as to how their actions impact others.

Thus, although their *intentions* may not be to harm others, their *actions* often do (e.g., by expropriating the "surplus value" created by others—to use Marxian language). To use ecological language here: If the *humans* of our society are perceived as the *host*, then the *humanoid* element—Category 2 individuals in particular—are *parasites*. Indeed, one could go so far, it seems to me, as to assert that that virtually all of our problems—as Americans, as, indeed, members of our *species*—are attributable to the presence of Category 2 individuals in our midst. (I will not, however, develop that point here.)

Insofar as that is true, the suggestion is that if we are to solve our problems, we must move to the right. In saying "move to the right" I am referring, of course, to the above figure; by no means am I saying that we should become members of the (Koch brothers-sponsored) Tea Party (a party that might better be called the Teat Party—because it really sucks!). I don't think that we will be able to solve the "global warming" problem: "global warming" is likely to continue, and intensify, resulting in the virtual extermination of our species; our only hope lies in some of us somehow being able to escape extinction.[114] But those who *do* escape will have an opportunity to develop societies peopled by Category 3 individuals—and should take advantage of that opportunity. After all, it is such people who live in accord with their "design specifications."

In anticipation that some reader might be one of those who is able to survive the consequences of "global warming," the question that such a person might ask is: What should I do *now*? The only *specific* recommendation that I would make, however, is that one initiate a Structured Interaction Group (SIG) (see my http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/04/a-%e2%80%9cmeaningful%e2%80%9d-solution and http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/05/more-on-the-structured-interaction-group/#more-33051). I would, however, add the following to my list of guidelines presented in the first paper:

- To help members of the group acquire the habit of listening to what others say, a short period of silence (roughly 30 seconds?) should be observed after someone has spoken.

- Members of the group must recognize that what is said during a given session is not to be used as a source of gossip. Generally, a rule of confidentiality should be observed; if, however, one chooses to discuss, with non-group individuals, topics discussed during sessions, one is expected to be discreet.

Given that a SIG—unlike the conventional "circle"—is oriented to *societal* rather than *personal* problems, the second guideline above should not be difficult to follow. But insofar as there is the possibility of rather "radical" ideas being expressed during a given SIG session, participants should use discretion in commenting, to "outsiders," on what has been discussed during a given session. On the other hand, participants in a given SIG should make known to "outsiders" the fact of their SIG participation, and encourage others either to join them or to inaugurate their own SIGs.

James B. Gray, in his discussion of the "Old Testament" ("Worship: An Exercise in Revisioning" http://www.religioustolerance.org/worship.pdf, pp. 15 - 28), the Law and Prophets

[114] See, e.g., James Lovelock, *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning*. New York: Basic Books, 2009.

in particular, suggests that these individuals used various devices beyond the institution of rules and "preaching" to move their society in a "Restorationist" direction. Given that these individuals were religious people—who would deny that?!—the suggestion is that we moderns not only establish SIGs outside of churches, but encourage our fellow Christians, Jews and other religionists to establish SIGs in their churches-synagogues (or . . .)—either as substitutes for existing adult classes or as additions to them. After all, supposedly what Christian churches (at least) are "about" is "salvation," and surely the educated among religionists realize that the sort of salvation of particular relevance today is that of our species—from extinction!

Vincent Bugliosi, in his recent *Divinity of Doubt: The God Question*,[115] states:

> there is only one necessary religion that has any merit to the people who inhabit this earth, and that's the Golden Rule: "Whosoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (from the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:12). To treat others as you would want them to treat you (the only obvious exception being when acting in any kind of self defense) is the highest, most noble form of human behavior and the basis of all morality. No matter what some papal encyclical says; no matter what some bishops conference says; no matter how many sacraments of the Catholic church there are or chapters and verses in the bible or thick and complex books by theologians or Sunday school classes and sermons by pastors; no matter how many heated arguments there are about God, Jesus, and religion; no matter how many pilgrimages there are to Mecca, Jerusalem, and other holy places; no matter how many thousands of hours Jewish scholars struggle over the meaning of the Torah; no matter how many multimillion-dollar churches and synagogues and grand cathedrals to Christ are constructed, nothing can ever change that simple reality.[116]

What Bugliosi seems to be implying here is that the churches *should* be focused primarily on the Golden Rule, but *aren't*—so that there is little hope that many churches would inaugurate SIGs. I would like to think, however, that "conversion" is possible—even with the churches!

I may very well be wrong on this score. Indeed, I suspect (irony of ironies!) that I *am* wrong. I believe, however, that if a significant number of churches were to recognize the role that they *could* play in humankind's salvation from extinction, the probability of that salvation would be significantly increased.

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[115] New York: Vanguard Press, 2011.

[116] Quoted from: http://www.truthout.org/sense-and-morality-agnosticism/1305482245. I should note here that although in the Matthew 7: 12 passage that Bugliosi quotes Jesus the author/redactor of Matthew has Jesus say that the Golden Rule summarizes the Law of the "Old Testament," Gray's discussion of the "Old Testament" (cited above) can be interpreted as suggesting that such is not the case. Certainly in terms of the figure that I present at the beginning, it would seem that one could be a follower of the Golden Rule and still be a Category 2 person—i.e., an individual who was both selfish and driven.

[The following essay should be thought of as a hypothesis that consists of a number of subhypotheses. It represents my reactions to, e.g., recent books by de Waal,[117] Broom,[118] Macedo and Ober,[119] Keltner,[120] and Bekoff and Pierce.[121]]

The Development of Morality

As one reads about the behavior of Jasmine the greyhound http://www.greatpetnet.com/630/jasmine-the-mother-theresa-greyhound/, one finds it easy to conclude that her behavior is "moral," or at least "moral-like."[122] In making such a judgment, however, one is—it should be obvious—taking *one's own* concept of "moral behavior" and applying it to the animal. But in recognizing *that* fact, several questions arise, among them:

- Does our moral thinking today have a genetic basis? The reasoning (unconscious, if not conscious) behind this position might be (as one possibility) the following:
    - We evolved from a "lower" form of life.
    - Individual members of that "form" developed, over time, a genetic proclivity for engaging in "moral-like" behaviors.[123]
    - We humans, as their descendants, have inherited those proclivities.
    - At some point in time we became *conscious* of those proclivities, "recognized" them as desirable ones, and therefore articulated them in a moral code.

[117] Frans de Waal, *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animal*s. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.

[118] Donald M. Broom, *The Evolution of Morality and Religion*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

[119] Stephen Macedo and Josiah Ober, editors, *Primates and Philosophers: How Morality Evolved*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006. This book consists of an introduction by the editors, a lengthy essay by Frans de Waal, comments of that essay by (successively) Robert Wright, Christine M. Korsgaard, Philip Kitcher, and Peter Singer, and, finally, a response to these five comments by de Waal.

[120] Dacher Keltner, *Born to be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009.

[121] Marc Bekoff, *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

[122] See also, e.g., Marc Bekoff, "The Emotional Lives of Animals." http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/can-animals-save-us/we-second-that-emotion

[123] *Why* this may have occurred—i..e, the operation of what mechanism(s) "produced" it—is, of course, a separate question—and one beyond the scope of this essay.

    - As our intelligence developed, we gained more experience with the code's "workability;" and as "conditions" changed over time, we modified the code in an effort to keep it as "up to date" as possible.

- Did our moral code arise, rather, *independently* of behavior that can be observed in animals?

- Did our moral code not "arise" at all; was it, rather, *given* to us by a divine power (along the lines of the Biblical story of the Ten Commandments being given to Moses by God)?

Some scholars have recently been referring to the "moral life" of some animal species—e.g., Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce, in their *Wild Justice: The Moral Life of Animals* (cited at the beginning). And this fact suggests that of the three possibilities identified above, their thinking is closest to the first position. Their doing so puts them in conflict with those who hold the third position, of course—there still being members of our society who hold that position, even though this is now the twenty-first century.

The second position seems to be held primarily by those who hold that when humans reached a certain level of intellectual development, they came to recognize that certain behaviors were "better" than others, and that because of that fact, along with the fact that "bad" behaviors were likely to occur, they (therefore) came to realize that it was desirable to *identify* the behaviors that were "bad" (which behaviors should therefore be avoided—perhaps under penalty of some form of punishment for violators that were detected); and also identify those behaviors that were "good," and therefore should be enjoined (with perhaps those engaging in "good" behaviors being praised—to reinforce such behavior).

It appears that most of those holding this second position either put no stock in the claim that we humans have certain innate behavioral proclivities (positive *or* negative), or hold that humans have an innate proclivity for anti-social behavior, so that for harmonious societal functioning, it is necessary to identify—and make known to all society members—those activities judged to be "good" (i.e., pro-social), and those judged to be "bad" (i.e., anti-social), and to encourage the former and discourage the latter.

Let me state here at the outset that I place myself in the second category, but that I do not identify with either of the two viewpoints identified in the previous paragraph:

- Although I agree that a certain level of intellectual development was required before a moral code was created (for I *do* perceive it as having been created), I do not perceive innate behavioral proclivities as having been irrelevant to the process of moral code formulation.

- I do not believe that humans have an innate proclivity for anti-social behavior—for the simple reason that if they did, it would be difficult to explain why societies formed in the first place! Difficult, but not impossible, I should add.

My "take" on how a moral code came into being is rooted in my belief that the Agricultural Revolution (that began about 10,000 years ago) represents a crucial dividing line in human development. Before developing that point, however, I would like, first, to present a classification of behaviors:

A. Reactions

    1. To external "events."[124]

    2. To an involuntary reaction of another (resulting, e.g., from "reading" another's facial expression).

    3. To what has been communicated to one by another (with words said perhaps being accompanied by gestures, and expressed in a certain tone of voice).

B. Actions

    1. In response to one of the above-listed reactions.

    2. In response to an innate "drive"—to obtain food, to engage in sex, etc.

    3. Resulting from "choice." Such actions may be associated with B.1. and B.2. actions, or be actions chosen during "free" time (e.g., play[125] activities).

Second, it is useful to classify behaviors on the basis of the integral relationship that exists between well-being and "good" behaviors (i.e., those behaviors that contribute to the well-being of another):

- One may discover, by accident, that "doing" for others not only results in an increase in *their* well-being (evident, e.g., through observing their facial expression), but in *one's own*. (This because one has been "programmed,"[126] by the selection factors of predation

[124] I would hypothesize that reactions first got programmed into our ancestors as a response to predatory activity: Those individuals having genes for this response had a higher probability of survival than those without them, and transmitted those genes to progeny.

[125] Although I associate "choice" with play activities, I also believe that an innate need for physical activity is what motivates (but only partially explains) play activities, and that such activities involve creativity, innovation. I find it conceivable, in fact, that the innovation that we associate with technological development had its roots in play activity. For an extended discussion of play see Chapter 19 ("Play, Social Learning, and Teaching"), pp. 500 – 517 in Melvin Konner's massive *The Evolution of Childhood: Relationships, Emotion, Mind*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.

[126] Keltner (op. cit., p. 6) has stated that "When we give to others, or act cooperatively, reward centers of the brain (such as the nucleus accumbens, a region dense with dopamine receptors) hum with activity." Here is a hypothesis regarding how the "programming" might have occurred: Of those males who happened to provide food and/or protection to females with young, those males experiencing a significant dopamine release as a result of such activity were thereby motivated to continue such behavior. They therefore had an increased chance of being selected for mating by females, so that their genes for dopamine release got transmitted to their progeny. Just a hypothesis, true, but with a high degree of plausibility, I believe.

and female-choice sexual selection to react this way—with Darwinian "natural selection" playing no role whatsoever here.[127]) Given that one's intelligence had developed to the point where one could recognize (at least in the sense of "sense") a causal relationship between one's actions and one's feeling of well-being, in the future one finds oneself "pulled" toward such behavior. In a sense, one's behavior here is "selfish," but is best viewed as simultaneously selfish and altruistic.

- In observing another, one may have reached a stage of intellectual development such that one can "read" the emotions of another (by observing their facial expressions, watching their gestures, listening to their vocalizations), and also *feel* those emotions oneself (i.e., develop a feeling of *empathy* for the other). If pain is associated with the emotion, one feels it oneself, and is thereby motivated ("pushed") to act on one's own feeling of pain—acting to reduce the pain being felt (one infers) in the other, and in the process reducing, if not eliminating, one's own feeling of pain. In a sense, one's behavior here is also "selfish," but is also best viewed as simultaneously selfish and altruistic.

  One may, rather than "reading" pain in another, "read" joy. In doing so, one will also acquire the same feeling, but in this case there is no need to act *toward* the other. Rather, one may join with the other in laughing and joking—thereby intensifying the feeling of joy in both parties.

- One may *learn* of (rather than observe) others in distress, and respond to this knowledge by feeling *sympathy* for the other—a reaction that is more intellectual than emotional. One may then make a conscious decision to provide some sort of assistance to those in distress (e.g., write a check to a charitable organization); in doing so, one will likely feel a quiet sense well-being—for *doing* good usually results in one *feeling* "good." (Note that I have used the word "good" here twice, and given each a different meaning. The very fact that we use the same word for a feeling and an ethical judgment seemingly suggests an unconscious recognition, on our part, that "doing good" is a "good" for both giver and recipient.)

  If one learns about the *joy* of another, one will not, of course, be motivated to engage in helping activity directed at that other—for, after all, it is obvious that s/he *needs* no help! One may very well, however, react to this news by oneself feeling a quiet sense of well-being (what might be termed a love for *humankind*), and react to that feeling by treating all those whom one meets in a cheerful, humorous manner, by sending a check to a charitable organization etc. That is, one may achieve a (temporary) state of mind such

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[127] It is also conceivable to me that "Lamarckian" factors played a role here. That the experience of social living somehow became encoded in the genes. Or, more likely, that the experience of social living led to epigenetic http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epigenetics developments that had behavioral implications.

> that one sees the world "through rose-colored glasses;" so that even where ugliness exists, one sees only beauty.[128]

It is, of course, true that many of our behaviors are of a neutral nature so far as any interactions between well-being and "goodness" are concerned; the behaviors that are of interest, however, are those behaviors that *do* involve such interaction.

Finally, I must make note of the fact that one of the more interesting topics regarding animal behavior that has received research attention recently is that of play activity; and one of the more interesting findings of such research is that such activities seem to be governed by implicitly-held rules. This observation not only raises questions about the mental and emotional capabilities of animals, but also suggests the "possibility that social play plays some role in the evolution of [the concept of] fairness and social morality . . . ."[129]

Moral-like *behavior* likely occurred with our ancestors,[130] but moral *codes*—ones that are *explicit*, that is—could not come into existence until humans had developed a certain level of intelligence, and also achieved a certain level of proficiency in communication. But even those developments, although *necessary*, were not *sufficient* for the development of moral codes. What had to occur as a precipitating "event" was a rupture in way of life, and that occurred with the Agricultural Revolution. Here, then, is the scenario that I would offer, tentatively, for the development of a moral *code* with humans:

My starting point here is the assumption that prior to the advent of that Revolution there had occurred a co-development of (a) humans as biological entities and a (b) way of life centered on gathering and hunting for sustenance purposes—with the former being done primarily by adult females, the latter by adult males. What I am suggesting here is that the biological development that occurred with our ancestors did so in the context of a certain way of life and that, therefore, that way of life had implications for the "direction" that biological development took. On the other hand, however, an important change of a biological nature that was occurring was that intelligence was increasing, and this was having an impact on the gathering-hunting way of life. Of particular importance (from my perspective here), relative to this development in intelligence, was that it was being accompanied by technological development (defined broadly), and that technological development eventuated in the Agricultural Revolution.

That Revolution involved a number of changes, including a change in diet, change from a somewhat mobile way of life to a sedentary one, change in the stimuli to which one was exposed, change in the nature of one's behaviors (relative to gaining sustenance, for example), change in the amount of "free time" available, etc. The most important change that occurred (I would argue), however, was the change that occurred in the *nature of societies*.

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[128] What I am suggesting here is that one may involuntarily achieve a "natural high," a state of bliss (a state of being associated with, e.g., Abraham Maslow).

[129] Marc Bekoff, "Social Play Behaviour: Cooperation, Fairness, Trust, and the Evolution of Morality, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol. 8, no. 2 (2001), p. 87. http://www.imprint.co.uk/pdf/81-90.pdf

[130] Social play likely originated with the appearance of mammals—i.e., about 200,000 million years ago. Konner, *op. cit.*, p. 502.

Gatherer-hunter groups had been small in size (but with fluctuating size, in response to external conditions, among other factors), and relationships within such societies had been relatively harmonious. The involuntary reactions that had developed in humans as a result of evolutionary processes (i.e., predation[131] and female-choice sexual selection) were ones (e.g., empathy) that promoted cooperative-helpful behavior relative to others in the group; so that within-group behaviors were much as found in experimental groups today. (See, e.g., the research results reported in Dacher Keltner's recently published a book, *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*, cited at the beginning.)

As the Agricultural Revolution began to unfold, not only did social groups become sedentary. They tended to grow in size—and, most importantly, to become less and less solidary, more and more segregated into different class groups, with that division becoming ever more pronounced over time.

Human societies were, in a sense, becoming more and more like bee ones—but with an important difference. Although bee societies have a definite "division of labor," as human societies were increasingly beginning to have, the members of a bee society are born into their categories: They have no choice regarding position, and presumably don't even have any *awareness* of having a position.

With humans, however, as (forced) changes were occurring in their behaviors, as a consequence of the "progressing" Agricultural Revolution, even though the changes may have entered *consciousness* but dimly, those changes were *sensed*. Especially sensed were changes in how one was now relating (*forced* to relate) to others in one's society; and especially if one sensed that one was being treated *unfairly* did one sense the changes that were occurring.[132]

Given two individuals in the same societal "situation," the fact that each had a unique biological inheritance would likely mean that one would sense the change more strongly than the other. However, of potentially more significance is that some of those of a higher "rank," who therefore were not themselves being treated badly ("unfairly," is how this might be perceived), might "read" (e.g., in the faces) the pain being experienced by those being mistreated, involuntarily react to that "reading" with a feeling of empathy, and then act on that feeling. That action might involve direct activities having the intention of diminishing the pain in others being sensed—for if one feels the pain of another, one is motivated to reduce *one's own* felt pain, and the "obvious" course of action for doing so is to attempt to help those others whom one perceives to be experiencing pain. Call this "selfish" behavior if you will, but the important fact about it is not its *motivation*, but its *effect*—that of helping others.

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[131] In terms of Walter B. Cannon's http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Bradford_Cannon "fight-flight" dichotomy, humans were a flight species. Thus, the presence of predators was important in their evolution. Regarding this latter point, see Donna Hart and Robert W. Sussman, *Man the Hunted: Primates, Predators, and Human Evolution*. New York: Westview Press, 2005.

[132] If a society develops in a different sort of environmental situation—e.g., a pastoral nomadic society developing in a desert environment or a seafaring society developing along a coastal area—and develops in a more egalitarian direction (excluding here the situation of females), a different sort of moral system may develop. For a discussion of the "values" associated with the Vikings see this article http://fathom.lib.uchicago.edu/1/777777122294/ .

There is another possible reaction here, however, and my interest here is primarily in that other possibility. It is a reaction that may occur in conjunction with the first reaction, or may occur independently: The "personality" of the person in question may be (along with position in the society, etc.) a decisive factor in influencing which course one takes in reacting.

This other possible reaction is one of developing "rules" as to what one should not do, and to then promulgate those "rules."[133] (I have no problem in asserting that those "rules" had their roots in game-playing by our ancestors.) In doing the latter, one may make the claim that the rules were revealed to one by God—these being done in an (unconscious) effort to give "force" to the rules. For, after all, there is no point in developing, and then promulgating, behavioral rules if one has no expectation that they will be followed. By claiming that the rules were not mere inventions but, rather, were divine decrees (i.e., *commandments*), the "hope" (at an unconscious level) is that this will motivate people to follow the rules.

Once might argue that the "purpose" (unaware to the rule-maker) of this rule-making was not just to accomplish a cessation of behaviors identified as hurtful, but ultimately to restore the former way of life. I would hypothesize that if one were to study early rule-making efforts carefully (e.g., that associated with the ancient Hebrews[134]), one would discover evidence in support of that hypothesis.

The initial rules created were of a negative sort—i.e., they specified behaviors that one should *refrain* from engaging in. However, over time the rules "evolved" in that over time:

- Rules regarding what one *should* do were added.
- The codification of rules occurred, with refinement of a given code occurring over time.
- "Pictures" of the Good Society were created—simple ones at first, e.g. the "People will build houses and get to live in them—they will not be used by someone else. They will plant vineyards and enjoy the wine—it will not be drunk by others."[135] (Granted that this particular "picture" certainly does not call to mind the gatherer-hunter way of life—except in the sense that it refers to a clearly *better* way of life.) This line of thinking became an important one, as Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel's massive *Utopian*

[133] Bekoff and Pierce note (*op. cit*., p. 116) note that rules are involved with play activity, and add that "During social play, individuals can learn a sense of what's right or wrong—what's acceptable to others—the result of which is the development and maintenance of a social group (a game) that operates efficiently." Likely Bekoff and Pierce are correct in suggesting that ideas of right and wrong—and the more general concept of fairness—first arose in the context of play. What I argue here, however, is that the development of moral systems with humans involved a series of steps with, perhaps the playing of games having been the first step in the process.

[134] Mark H. Gaffney has noted: "From the Bible it is clear that many Hebrews did not welcome the transition from seminomadism to a settled way of life. Strict Yahwists bridled at the perceived corrupting influence of Canaanite culture and religion. Rechabites lamented with nostalgia the passing of the old ways (Jeremiah 35), and many continued to view the former pastoral lifestyle as normative. *Gnostic Secrets of the Naassenes: The Initiatory Teachings of the Last Supper*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, 2004, pp. 78 – 79.

[135] *Isaiah* 65:21 – 22, in (p. 813) *Good News Bible*. New York: American Bible Society 1976.

Thought in the Western World http://www.amazon.com/Utopian-Thought-Western-World-Manuel/dp/0674931866 demonstrates.

- The development of ethical *systems*—i.e., rules accompanied by a reasoned rationalization of those rules (that is, why they are "good" rules).
- The development of principles that should be followed with animal treatment—including views on whether or not meat should be eaten; and if so, from what species of animals.
- Ideas relative to the protection of natural features—such as Yosemite, Devil's Tower, drumlins in Wisconsin.

Another important development that should be mentioned here is resistance, on the part of a society's elite, to change the system of moral rules generally accepted in the society. The reason for such resistance is that, as Edward Alsworth Ross[136] noted over a century ago, in civilized societies, as societies change, their moral systems tend to lag behind that change—so harmful behaviors that emerge are not "covered" by the existing moral system. As this occurs, some members of the society may *sense* this emergence of harmful behaviors, but be unable to *declare* them as such because of their lack of inclusion in the existing moral system. Given that these emerging harmful behaviors are likely to be most engaged in by members of the elite, those individuals, recognizing the advantage granted to them by the existing (obsolete) moral system, would be expected to resist any efforts to update it.

Related to this, members of the elite seem to be gifted at masking hurtful behaviors by giving them innocuous names—such as "collateral damage." Being aware of the fact that we attach emotional feelings to many of our words, they remove the negative feelings associated with the word "killing" by substituting for it "collateral damage." Related to this, they *mislead* the public by, e.g., self-righteously using "terrorist" when the more accurate label would be "*counter*terrorist." Etc.

The last point that I would like to make here is that if the *ostensible* purpose of a moral system is to improve existing behavior, the *ultimate/actual* (if unrecognized) purpose is to restore a way of life comparable to what existed prior to the Agricultural Revolution. To, that is, restore a way of life wherein "moral" behavior was virtually automatic, so that there was no *need* for explicit rules.

Given these "facts," the question arises: Do moral systems "work"? And in addressing this question, one must admit—if one is honest—that moral systems, although they have helped in "improving" behavior (especially if penalties are associated with "bad" behaviors, and those penalties are enforced?), they have done little, if anything, to accomplish Restoration. By "Restoration" I am not, of course, referring to a return to a gathering-hunting way of life. Rather, I am referring to something more abstract—the creation of a way of life that would be in accord with our "design specifications" as humans.

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[136] *Sin and Society: An Analysis of Latter-Day Iniquity*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971, With Introduction by Julius Weinberg, and a Letter from Theodore Roosevelt. Originally published by Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1907.

A second problem associated with moral codes is that although their original intent may have been to bring about a more *general* welfare, as a society becomes increasingly stratified, and increasingly under the control of an elite, the elite uses the moral code for its own advantage: It uses the code to keep "commoners" in their place; it fights changes in the code that might identify some of their activities as "bad," it involves itself in the intellectual chicanery of inventing labels for "bad" activities that have neutral or even positive connotations; etc.

There is, at present, a "crying need" to recognize (a) the purpose of moral codes, (b) the fact that they are failing in that purpose, and that (c) the need today is for societal system change. Change that will lead us in the direction of our "design specifications" (at minimum), while simultaneously leading us toward sustainability. These are, one might say, the moral imperatives for today.

May such changes occur; if they don't, the likelihood is that our species will become extinct before the century is out, this resulting from the fact that we appear to be the stupidest of the intelligent species! If we disappear as a species, the cause will be our own shortsightedness—to the extent of blindness. Unfortunately, that shortsightedness/blindness has already resulted in the extinction of some species, and likely will result in many more—our own extinction being a strong possibility.

The "Patriotic Millionaires": Admirable Citizens?

Alton C. Thompson

Recently members of the group calling themselves "Patriotic Millionaires for Fiscal Strength" sent a letter to Pres. Barack Obama, Harry Reid (Majority Leader in the U. S. Senate), and John Boehner (Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives). What made the letter notable was that it requested that "you increase taxes on incomes over $1,000,000"—the letter then being signed by a long list of millionaires.

The letter (http://patrioticmillionaires.org) claimed that the signers were all "loyal citizens" who recognized that "Our country faces a choice—we can pay our debts and build for the future, or we can shirk our financial responsibilities and cripple our nation's potential." The signers recognized that "Our country has been good to us. It provided a foundation through which we could succeed." And in recognizing that their success was not just a result of their personal attributes, they added that "we want to do our part to keep that foundation strong so that others can succeed as we have."

They concluded: "Please do the right thing for our country. Raise our taxes."

Ostensibly, these individuals are deserving of praise, for they not only realize (seemingly) that the society they live in has provided them with opportunities that they have simply taken advantage of. In addition, they express *appreciation* for those opportunities—and want (or so they say) to do their part in ensuring that "others can succeed as we have

I suppose that one should be heartened by this letter. But for several reasons, I find it difficult to generate much enthusiasm regarding this gesture on their part.

First, I question whether they are motivated solely (or at all?!) by the principle of fairness—regarding taxation specifically. I suspect that these individuals are knowledgeable enough to recognize that our economy is teetering on the brink, and also know that the federal government likely won't act to prevent economic collapse. Thus, they know that if *they* don't act, it's likely the economy *will* collapse. In acting to prevent this from occurring, they will be making a societal contribution, true, but also acting in their own interests. For if the economy collapses, they may cease being millionaires in consequence.

In justifying their proposal they give the *impression* that their primary interest is the *country* and its "potential" —and that they are altruistic besides. For they claim an interest in seeing "others . . . succeed as we have." But these justifications strike me as phony—as simply diverting attention from their *self*-interest in not having the economy collapse—an event which would affect *them* adversely. We ordinary folk would be affected even more, of course, but I doubt that these millionaires have much concern for *that* fact.

Second, if these individuals are such "good citizens," the question arises: Why do they focus on taxation-revenue to the exclusion of how the federal government *spends* the money it takes in? Are they not concerned with the fact that our imperial adventurism, with its huge military budget, is (among other things) a tremendous drag on our economy? Are they not aware that that

adventurism has resulted in "blowback" that not only is used to justify *further* military expenditures, but also to justify "security" measures in this country that have curtailed our freedoms? Are they unable to see that we are moving ever more in a fascistic direction? Do they even *care*?

The question, relative to this, that I would like to see answered regarding these individuals is: How many of them are "feeding from the government's trough"? I possess no evidence that any of them are, but I have my suspicions—based, in part, on their apparent lack of concern regarding *expenditures* being made by the federal government. The apparent fact that their interest seems to be merely on keeping the economy going suggests to me that their focus is just on the immediate future—and the maintenance of their wealth.

I would have more enthusiasm for the request made by these individuals if it were combined with some recognition that attention needs to be given to more than just the short run. These individuals seem to perceive the future as simply a *succession* of todays—so that a phenomenon such as "global warming" is simply not on their "mental maps." That being the case, they are either unaware of the fact that, e.g., James Lovelock predicts that few members of our species will be alive by the end of this century, or are aware of his prediction, but choose to ignore it. (The latter would not be surprising, given the abundance of "deniers" in our society. For an explanation, see:) http://www.commondreams.org/view/2011/06/15-3.)

Which is unfortunate—and even somewhat surprising. For given that these individuals are aware (ostensibly) that their wealth has a societal basis, one would think that they would have more vision. The title of Ralph Nader's 2009 novel *Only the Super-Rich Can Save Us* may very well be correct—insofar as we *can* be "saved." However, I see no evidence that members of the "Patriotic Millionaires for Fiscal Strength" group are interested in anything but the short run. True, their letter makes reference to "the future," but these individuals seem to view "the future" as merely a *continuation* of the present, not something drastically different. The "givens" that they tacit accept regarding the future, seemingly, are highly questionable, given the science of "climate change."

If they have even a minimum of "liberal education," they will recognize that economic activities, because they involve energy usage, and the energy involved is derived primarily from "fossil fuels" (e.g., coal, petroleum, natural gas), those activities contribute to "global warming." To reduce that "contribution," it would therefore be necessary for individuals to use (directly *and* indirectly) less energy on a per capita basis and/or use just energy derived from "safe" sources. Either of those options would involve significant changes in the economy; and these millionaires are surely knowledgeable enough to realize that progress in making those changes will not result from a change in the tax code—will not even result from governmental *actions*, for that matter. Progress *might*, however, result if these individuals recognized "whither we are tending" (to quote from Abraham Lincoln's famous "House Divided" speech) and their potential role in changing our society's direction.

What should they do instead of lobbying for tax reform? That's for *them* to determine. My only advice is: *Decide* how you can help your fellow citizens adapt to the inevitable societal changes that lie ahead, and then *act* on those ideas. Those actions will not prevent "runaway" from occurring, with the subsequent loss of most of the world's population. They may, however,

result in at least some members of our species adapting to the inevitable changes that will be occurring.

Toward a *New* Moral Equivalent of War

by

Alton C. Thompson

July 22, 2011

Prefatory Remarks

I have difficulty avoiding thought about the future because I have a picture of one of my granddaughters on my computer screen—a beautiful girl standing in Fall splendor on the Boston College campus. In addition, I have a picture of my other granddaughter—older, but also beautiful—on my mouse pad, sitting next to her handsome younger brother. (Another grandchild—to be a sister of the one in Boston—is due in about one month.) Thus, I can relate to Mark Hertsgaard, whose *Hot*[137] was written in part because he has a young daughter, and is understandably concerned about the sort of future she'll be living in.

I know that I should have started thinking seriously about the future much earlier. After all, in the late 1950s, while in college, I had taken a conservation course (which used a text by Raymond Dassman, and was taught by Dr. Jacob Shapiro, who taught the course with the fire of a Hebrew prophet). Around the same time I read Harrison Brown's *The Challenge of Man's Future*.[138] In the early 1970s I read *The Limits to Growth*[139] and E. F. Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*.[140] In the 1980s I read Catton's *Overshoot*[141] and Stephen H. Schneider's *Global Warming*.[142] In the 1990s I read Al Gore's *Earth in the Balance*[143] and Alan Thein Durning's *How Much is Enough?*[144] Several years ago I read James Lovelock's *The Revenge of Gaia*,[145] Tim Flannery's *The Weather Makers*,[146] and Bill McKibben's *Deep Economy*.[147] Etc.

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[137] *Hot: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011. There is also, of course, James Hansen's, *Storms of My Grandchildren: The Truth About the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity*. New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2009.

[138] New York: Viking Press, 1954.

[139] Donella Meadows, Dennis Meadows, Jørgen Randers, and William W. Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth*. New York: Universe Books, 1972.

[140] New York: Harper & Row, 1973.

[141] William R. Catton, Jr., *Overshoot: The Ecological Basis of Revolutionary Change*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1982.

[142] *Global Warming: Are We Entering the Greenhouse Century?* San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books, 1989.

[143] Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*. New York: Rodale, Inc., 2006. Originally published in 1992.

[144] *How Much is Enough? The Consumer Society and the Future of the Earth*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992.

[145] James Lovelock, *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth's Climate Crisis & The Fate of Humanity*. New York: Basic Books, 2006.

[146] *The Weather Makers: How Man is Changing the Climate and What it Means for Life on Earth*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005.

[147] *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*. New York: Times Books/Henry Holt and Company, 2007.

Why, then, have I done so little in working for a better future? I would rationalize my inaction by referring to the fact that Madhu Suri Prakash (a contributing editor to *Yes!* magazine) recently wrote a letter to Wendell Berry, "proposing that he write an open letter to President Obama calling for funding to establish new small farms." (http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/beyond-prisons/a-quieter-life-now?utm_source=jun11&utm_medium=yesemail&utm_campaign=mrQuieterLifeNow) Berry's response, in part:

> "I'm not a leader. I am, above all, in no way comparable to Gandhi, who was an ascetic. I love the world's abundance of ordinary pleasures. And he was a leader. I have neither the character nor the abilities required for leadership. And I want no followers. If I looked back and saw myself being followed, my only wish would be to escape. I am a mostly solitary man, always in need of quiet, who has written some essays inviting, not converts or followers, but honest judgment."

(Berry made the reference to MohandasGandhi [1869 – 1948] because Prakash had written, in her letter, "Your long patience with all of us during the past half-century reminds me of the 50-year-old patience of Gandhi.")

Just as Berry is "in no way comparable to Gandhi (so he claims, at any rate), I am in no way comparable to Wendell Berry.[148] Not only am I, like Berry, not a leader; even more like Berry, I am not an activist. I wish that I had the adventurist blood of some of my ancestors—such as Wolfgang Klingenberg (who around 1500 CE left the Constance area of Germany, and acquired a large property at the far end of Songefjord in Norway), Tjøstolv Torjesen (my father's grandfather, who left the Tvedestrand area of Norway for Chicago in 1848), and Nonis Hasselquist, my mother's grandfather, who was involved in the Nevada silver rush in the 1860s). But I don't seem to have their "gumption." (If I do, it hasn't come to the surface yet!) In addition, I have been in the same boat as most others in our society: In being forced to "make a living," I have of necessity been living in the here-and-now. It appears, then, that the most that I can do is to develop, and write down, some ideas, and then try to get them posted. At least that's all I've done so far, and that may be all that I'm "destined" to do.

I come to that writing with a very limited background in science. While in high school I limited my science exposure to Physics. While in college, my major was History, with minors in English and Geology—so that the latter was my only exposure to science. In graduate school my focus was on Urban Economic Geography, Economics, and Sociology, and over the years I have been an avid reader, but especially in the "social studies" area rather than science. Thus, my education in the area of "climate science" is a result of my reading "on the side" rather than course work. Given the newness of "climate science," most individuals would, of course, admit the same thing.

[148] I once heard him speak at a conference, but did not have an opportunity to speak with him. I had attended the conference at Paul Shepard's invitation, and chatted with Paul briefly before his presentation, but not to any of the other of the speakers that day.

In the case of a subject such as "global warming," there are, it seems to me, four basic questions to ask:

- What is the *course* (over time and space) of its occurrence?
- *Why* is it occurring?
- What are the *effects* of its occurrence?
- Given those effects, *how* should we humans respond?

I will be the first to acknowledge that I have nothing to offer so far as the first three questions are concerned: As with most others, I must rely on others with the relevant expertise for answers to those questions.[149] It is only the fourth question—which is one that involves *opinion*, but opinion based (one hopes) on objective fact—that I dare address; and I would like to think that because I have developed a unique viewpoint regarding what we should do, that viewpoint is worthy of consideration by others.

Let me state in advance, however, that one way of perceiving my recommendations is to regard them as a sort of Sorelian myth. Georges Sorel [1847 – 1922], was a Frenchman who is usually categoriezed as a "syndicalist," "Syndicalism grew out of trade union associations that espoused the utopian vision of one day controlling their industries and, eventually, the political state." (http://www.cooper.edu/humanities/classes/coreclasses/hss3/g_sorel.html) Sorel is most noted for having written *Reflections on Violence* (1908), a book in which he developed the "notion of the general strike as a mythic belief, the widespread acceptance of which would prompt collective action by workers as well as soften employers' resolve against concessions."

I have never read Sorel's book (and likely never will—and certainly do not advocate the use of violence, as did Sorel), but gather from reading about Sorel that he developed the idea of a general strike not so much as an event that was *likely* to occur, but as an *idea*—a "myth"—that, if accepted by people, had the capability of motivating people to take action. At any rate, this is how I think of "Sorelian myth;" and I refer to the recommendation that I will make in a later posting as such a myth because I view it not so much as a serious recommendation as a set of ideas that (I hope) have potential to motivate people. To motivate them to *think* about how to respond to "global warming," and also motivate them to themselves develop "action plans" in response to the ideas that they develop.

This is not to say that I present my recommendations without any thought that they are unworthy of implementation. It *is* to say, however, that I know that it would be neither possible—nor even desirable!—for those recommendations to be followed to the letter. The recommendations should be perceived, rather, as some ideas intended to supplement the ideas of others, and specifically ideas having pertinence especially for the early stages of a process of *societal*

[149] As a consequence, I will make no attempt here to rebut the arguments set forth recently on this site by Denis Rancourt in "The Lie of Climate Change Science" (http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/03/the-lie-of-climate-change-science).

change. *If* those ideas are implemented (along with other ideas from others), they will initiate a certain course of development; but that course will evolve in a way that none of us can predict at this time.

I will be presenting my ideas in a series of postings, the initial one (below) commenting on a relevant essay written by philosopher William James.

Part I: Introduction

> "So far, the fight against global warming has been conspicuously lacking in inspiration, perhaps in part because it has been conspicuously lacking in people who are willing to lay it on the line. Maybe the movement is still young or maybe the enemy is too diffuse. Or maybe we just like the idea of living on a hotter planet."[150]

A little over a century ago (in 1906) philosopher William James [1842 – 1910] delivered his famous "The Moral Equivalent of War" speech (http://www.des.emory.edu/mfp/moral.html) at Stanford University, his essay with that name (published in 1910) having been derived from that speech.[151] It has been noted (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_James) that James, in his earlier writings (e.g., the massive *Principles of Psychology*, 1890), had"sought to re-conceive the human mind as inherently purposive and selective"—a point of view that was in conflict with the dominant philosophical schools of the day. "Moral Equivalent" can be conceived as an essay exemplifying this point of view.[152]

James—who asserted "I devoutly believe in the reign of peace and in the gradual advent of some sort of socialistic equilibrium"—began his essay, however, by recognizing that this "war [against war] is going to be no holiday excursion or camping party." Why? Because "The military feelings are too deeply grounded to abdicate their place among our ideals until better substitutes are offered than the glory and shame that come to nations as well as individuals from the ups and downs of politics and the vicissitudes of trade." (A statement that rings as true—

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[150] Jeff Goodell, "Time for Climate Activists to Get Tough," June 30, 2011. (http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2011/06/30-12)

[151] This epigraph (written by?) appears above the essay on the Emory University site: This essay, based on a speech delivered at Stanford University in 1906, is the origin of the idea of organized national service. The line of descent runs directly from this address to the depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps to the Peace Corps, VISTA, and AmeriCorps. Though some phrases grate upon modern ears, particularly the assumption that only males can perform such service, several racially-biased comments, and the notion that the main form of service should be viewed as a "warfare against nature," it still sounds a rallying cry for service in the interests of the individual and the nation.

[152] Lee Harris, in his interesting "Why Isn't Socialism Dead?" (http://www.lee-harris.org/2482/why-isnt-socialism-dead), relates the thinking of James to Georges Sorel [1847 – 1922], and Sorel's thinking, in turn, to that of, e.g., Karl Marx [1818 – 1883] and Eduard Bernstein [1850 – 1932].

unfortunately!—in our day as it did in James's; see, e.g., Henry Giroux http://www.counterpunch.org/giroux06292011.html.)

James "admitted" (wrongly, it turns out) that "We inherit the warlike type; and for most of the capacities of heroism that the human race is full of we have to thank this cruel history. . . . Our ancestors have bred pugnacity into our borne and marrow, and thousands of years of peace won't breed it out of us." He added: "Militarism is the great preserver of our ideals of hardihood, and human life with no use for hardihood would be contemptible. Without risks or prizes for the darer, history would be insipid indeed; and there is a type of military character which everyone feels that the race should never cease to breed, for everyone is sensitive to its superiority." Therefore, "The duty is incumbent on mankind, of keeping military character in stock—if keeping them, if not for use, then as ends in themselves and as pure species of perfection . . . ."

One who believes (as did James) "devoutly in the reign of peace," yet recognizes our (supposedly) natural proclivities for violent behavior, needs also to recognize "two unwillingnesses of the imagination, one aesthetic, and the other moral; unwillingness, first, to envisage a future in which army-life, with its many elements of charm, shall be forever impossible, and in which the destinies of peoples shall nevermore be decided quickly, thrillingly, and tragically by force, but only gradually and insipidly by 'evolution,' and, secondly, unwillingness to see the supreme theatre of human strenuousness closed, and the splendid military aptitudes of men doomed to keep always in a state of latency and never show themselves in action. These insistent unwillingnesses, no less than other aesthetic and ethical insistencies, have, it seems to me, to be listened to and respected. One cannot meet them effectively by mere counter-insistency on war's expensiveness and horror. The horror makes the thrill; and when the question is getting the extremist and supremest out of human nature, talk of expense sounds ignominious."

How, then, does the pacifist (e.g., James) proceed? "Pacifists ought to enter more deeply into the aesthetical and ethical point of view of their opponents." For "So long as antimilitarists propose no substitute for war's disciplinary function, no *moral equivalent* of war, analogous, as one might say, to the mechanical equivalent of heat, so long they fail to realize the full inwardness of the situation. And as a rule they do fail. The duties, penalties, and sanctions pictured in the utopias they paint are all too weak and tame to touch the military-minded."

James put himself "firmly into the anti-military party," and looked "forward to a future when acts of war shall be formally outlawed as between civilized peoples." But, he continued, "I do not believe that peace either ought to be or will be permanent on this globe, unless the states, pacifically organized, preserve some of the old elements of army-discipline. A permanently successful peace-economy cannot be a simple pleasure-economy. In the more or less socialistic future toward which mankind seems drifting [not in 2011! and certainly not in the United States!] we must still subject ourselves collectively to those severities which answer to our real position upon this only partly habitable globe. We must make new energies and hardihoods continue the manliness to which the military mind so faithfully clings. Martial virtues must be the enduring cement . . . ."

He continued: "The war-party is assuredly right in affirming and reaffirming that the martial virtues, although originally gain by the race through war, are absolute and permanent human

goods." For, after all, "Patriotic pride and ambition in their military form are . . . only specifications of a more general competitive passion. They are its first form, but that is no reason for supposing them to be its last form." "What the whole community comes to believe in grasps the individual as in a vise. The war-function has grasped us so far; but the constructive interests may some day seem no less imperative, and impose on the individual a hardly lighter burden."

To be more concrete in making a recommendation: "If now—and this is my idea—there were, instead of military conscription, a conscription of the whole youthful population [of males] to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against *Nature*, the [social] injustice [currently existing] would tend to be evened out, and numerous other goods to the commonwealth would remain blind as the luxurious classes are now blind, to man's relations to the globe he lives on, and to the permanently sour and hard foundations of his higher life."

Thus, by conscripting (male) youth, but for purposes other than war preparation, one could accomplish two goals at once: One could contribute to the development of a pacifist spirit in those conscripted, while simultaneously reducing classism in the society.

Those so conscripted would engage in a "war against Nature." Specifically, they would be sent: "To coal and iron mines, to freight trains, to fishing fleets in December, to dishwashing, clotheswashing, and windowwashing, to road-building and tunnel-making, to foundries and stoke-holes, and to the frames of skyscrapers, would our gilded youths be drafted off, according to their choice, to get the childishness knocked out of them, and to come back into society with healthier sympathies and soberer ideas. They would have paid their blood-tax, done their own part in the immemorial human warfare against nature; they would tread the earth more proudly, the women would value them more highly, they would be better fathers and teachers of the following generation."

Such conscription should appeal to the military-minded, for it "would preserve in the midst of a pacific civilization the manly virtues which . . . [they are] so afraid of seeing disappear in peace. We should get toughess without callousnous, authority with a as little criminal cruelty as possible, and painful work done cheerily because the duty is temporary, and threatens not, as new, to degrade the whole remainder of one's life." "So far," James continued, "war has been the only force that can discipline a whole community, and until an equivalent discipline is organized, I believe that war must have its way." He added that "I have no serious doubt that the ordinary prides and shames of social man, once developed to a certain intensity, are capable of organizing such a moral equivalent as I have sketched, or some other just as effective for preserving manliness of type. It is but a question of time, of skillful propagandism, and of opinion-making men seizing historic opportunities."

James's argument, in brief, was, then:

1. Waging a war against war will not be easy because war has been with us since early times.

2. The reason for that fact is that we are naturally competitive, and that natural proclivity has been expressed, in part, through militarism.

3. Some supporters of war argue that it preserves certain desirable personal traits in the population.

4. Other supporters argue that unless nations expand, they will shrink, and that they need war for expansion.

5. James asserted that until pacifists propose a substitute for war that has a disciplinary function that is military in character, they will be unsuccessful.

6. He added that military virtue provides a cement to a society.

7. He argued that our competitive nature needs to be expressed in a constructive way.

8. That way was a "war against Nature," and he proposed that male youth be conscripted to engage in such a war.

Several comments are in order regarding some of the points in this essay:

1. I agree that there is a better course of action than one focused on militarism; for militarism not only results in loss of life (of our people, along with other peoples) and property damage, but is costly—directly and indirectly. In addition, our *actions* often result in terrorist *reactions*. Put another way—and more accurately—*our* terrorist activities result in "blowback" (a term associated with Chalmers A. Johnson http://books.google.com/books/about/Blowback.html?id=oKbWn8OtEVIC) in the form of *counter* terrorist activities.

2. The assumption of an innate competitive nature was plausible in James's day because Charles Darwin's concept of "natural selection" *assumed* it (without, however, *proving* it).[153] But anthropological research over the years,[154] and recent observational and experimental research[155] has made that viewpoint untenable.

3. A society likely needs some sort of "cement" (indeed, it's hard to imagine a society that lacks one!), but the question arises: Can that "cementing" be accomplished by *forcing*

[153] I say "concept" rather than "theory" for the simple reason that it was not the latter. It was a concoction for which Darwin provided no empirical support—for the simple reason that it *has* little such support—and none in the *case* of humans. See my discussion of Darwin in http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/05/some-uses-of-biology-three-perspectives.

[154] See, e.g., Stanley Diamond, *In Search of the Primitive*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1974; Robin Clarke and Geoffrey Hindley, *The Challenge of the Primitives*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1975; and Colin M. Turnbull, *The Human Cycle*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.

[155] See, e.g., Frans B. M. de Waal, *Good Natured: The Origins of Right and Wrong in Humans and Other Animals*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996; and Dacher Keltner, *Born to Be Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009.

certain actions upon individuals, even if that forcing involves selection from among a series of options? (My answer: I have my doubts!)

4. One might have expected James to have suggested sports as a suitable glue—the modern Olympics having been re-started (in Athens, Greece) in 1896: As a Green Bay Packers fan for the past 50+ years, I find such a suggestion highly plausible. However, James insists on *constructive* activities as necessary for providing the necessary "cement," and insists on conscription. I concur with James on this point, and offer precisely that in this series. My view of what constitutes "constructive" differs, however, from that of James.

5. There are ambiguities associated with James's list of activities. It's not clear whether these would be public-funded activities, private ones, or some mix. If the activities included privately-owned organizations, there is the question of finding ones willing to participate with the program. And although those working for a public organization would be paid by the government, how would those working for privately-owned organizations be paid (assuming the involvement of such organizations)—and would any government supervision be provided?

6. James provided no assessment as to how practical his proposal was—how likely it was that the federal government would accept it. Indeed, one would need to admit that it has *never* been accepted. (One might argue that, e.g., the Peace Corps was inspired by James's essay; if it was, it involved no conscription, and was not clearly a "war against Nature."

7. Even had James's proposal been implemented, it likely would have done little in serving a "cementing" function: It's difficult to imagine how anyone could generate much enthusiasm for his proposal!

I think of my proposal (discussed in Parts IV and V) as responding—from a "Jamesian" standpoint—to René Dubos's statement: "To long for a human situation not subservient to the technological order is not a regression or escapist attitude but rather one that requires a progressive outlook and heroic efforts." And: "The impulse to withdraw from a way of life we know to be inhuman is probably so widespread that it will become a dominant social force in the future."[156]

And to this statement by Paul Shepard: "There are many striking parallels between post-industrial men and hunter-gatherer men. They are both highly mobile, non-territorial, non-soil-working, nature-interested, much leisured, function-oriented, small-familied, and altruistic. The most modern urban men are ready to abandon, if they only knew how, civilization based on war

[156] *So Human An Animal*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968, p. 196.

and competition and on industry so heavy that the human personality as well as the surface of the earth is stamped with its obscenity."[157]

What, you may ask, do these statements have to do with "global warming"?—given that the only "environmental" reference here is to "the surface of the earth." In Parts IV and V I will discuss their relevance; at this point I will simply note that a proposal that responds to the above statements of Dubos and Shepard would seem to have the potential of *motivating* people to act—in my case releative to "global warming" (among other problems, some of which are identified in Part IV).

I would like to think that the proposal that I put forward in this series has motivational capabilities because it:

- Addresses what is perhaps the major threat facing humankind at present, that of "global warming."
- Simultaneously addresses many other important societal problems as well.
- Has plausibility—so that it should be capable of implementation (with the qualifications specified in the Prefatory Remarks above).
- Relies on a means that should be attractive to many in our society.

If December 21, 2012, marks the dawn of a New Age, perhaps this will be because what I propose in this series is acted upon!

I recognize the possibility of many good ideas out there,[158] and offer my proposal, not as one as providing THE answer to our problems, but as just another proposal.

Part II: "Global Warming"

As I indicated in Part I of my "Toward a *New* Moral Equivalent of War," (http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/07/toward-a-new-moral-equivalent-of-war) my interest in this series is not so much in "global warming" *per se* but, rather, how to *respond* to "global warming." It is desirable, however, and even necessary, to present some commentary on this topic, and I therefore do so in this essay.

I have put "global warming" in quotation marks not because I am a "denier" but, rather, because the term itself is unfortunate—and I can offer no suitable substitute. ("Global atmospheric temporal changes" might be more accurate, but is too much of a mouthful!) What makes the term "unfortunate" is that the atmospheric phenomena associated with the term include not only a *trend* in increase (*not* a continuous increase, note) in the global mean temperature, but also (a) an increased number of storms, (b) an increase in their severity, and (c) increased variability in

[157] *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973, p. 277.

[158] See, e.g., the Hertsgaard book cited in endnote 1, his discussion of Ron Sims, for example (p. 78 ff.).

atmospheric conditions—for a given area over time, and geographically. Indeed, there may be other phenomena of importance that are missing from this list.

Some distinguish between "global warming" and "climate change,"[159] but I do not—and also have problems with "climate change." For given that, by definition, the "climate" of a place is the temporal *pattern* of atmospheric phenomena (e.g., temperature, precipitation) from an annual standpoint, if no such pattern exists, the place cannot be said to *have* a climate! That is, given that the sequence of atmospheric "events" for one year must be highly similar to that sequence for any other year for a place to have a "climate," increasing annual variability in atmospheric events for a given place means that the very *concept* of "climate" becomes increasingly meaningless for that place.

When Wladimir Köppen (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wladimir_K%C3%B6ppen) introduced his classification of climate types in 1884, what enabled him to do so is that the temporal patterning referred to above existed. Increasingly, however, an expectation of "climate scientists" is that this patterning will be becoming less and less pronounced—to the point that "climate" will no longer have a referent (thereby being equivalent to "unicorn"!). The *word* will continue to exist, of course, but increasingly it will point to a "thing" that is fading away, perhaps to the point of non-existence. Put another way, global warming does not involve a change from one climate *type* to another; rather, it involves change from a climate type toward a *non-climate* sort of situation.

I use the term "global warming" here simply because it is in common usage, meaning by that term the array of atmospheric phenomena (at minimum) identified above.

"Climate deniers" in our midst represent an important obstacle to addressing the problem of global warming. Although some individuals are likely deniers because they (understandably) have difficulty in relating what they observe, day by day, to claims by scientists who have been researching the matter for many years, a much lesser degree of innocence is associated with many others in this group. Corporations involved in industries contributing to global warming have an economic incentive to continue their activities, for their orientation tends to be only to the short-run—making profits in the short-run, so that those who have invested in their business can make a good return on their investments. What many such corporations have done, therefore, is hire "scientists" not expert in "climate science," and/or scientists willing to work for corporations to provide "proof" that global warming is a hoax. If one goes to http://books.google.com and enters "global warming," one will find that many of one's hits are of books by such individuals—giving the impression, to the non-specialist, that the deniers have a solid basis for their position.[160]

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[159] For example, Mark Hertsgaard, *Hot: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011, p. 5.

[160] For a good discussion of "denial" see Nicole Hodgson: http://www.abc.net.au/unleashed/2778378.html. Also see Clive Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth About Climate* Change. Washington, DC: Earthscan, 2010. Additional books on the subject include James Hoggan (with Richard Littlemore), *Climate Cover-Up: The Crusade to Deny Global Warming*. Vancouver, Canada: Greystone Books, 2009; Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues From Tobacco to*

In our legal system, defense lawyers are expected to develop a case for their client (e.g., Casey Anthony—who was recently acquitted in her trial), even if they are convinced that that individual is guilty—and no one regards this as unethical: they are just doing what our legal system expects of them. But scientists should not think of themselves as lawyers (God forbid!); rather, they should think of themselves as truth-seekers, whose ethics do not permit them to be "bought off." But one suspects that at least some of the scientists who are engaged in global warming denial have compromised their ethics. Which is not to say that climate scientists do not have disagreements one with another, however.

For example, a posting by Dr. Gavin A. Schmidt[161] (http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2010/06/climate-change-commitment-ii/) is followed by 727 comments (!) at last count by others (mainly other scientists, I assume). But that fact of having divergent views is not a peculiarity but, rather, a common phenomenon in the sciences. Scientists who have not "sold out" are, on the one hand, not afraid of expressing their views to other scientists, with the full expectation that other scientists may find flaws in their thinking. In learning of the reactions of other scientists, they then modify their views, for their ultimate interest is in arriving at objective truth (i.e., statements agreed to by most other specialists in the same area). But scientists are human beings just like the rest of us, so that they are not always able, as a group, to achieve universal agreement. And given that in the case of climate science there is but limited opportunity for experimentation, and projections into the future (which are *inherently* "non-factual" in that they pertain to the "not yet") are an integral part of the science, it is by no means surprising that there is perhaps less agreement among climate scientists than most other scientists.

From the fact that universal agreement is difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in climate science, it does not follow that scientists should abandon their research in that area, for their research has tremendous relevance for the human future. Nor is it sensible for us lay people to deny the reality of global warming: The hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and fires (resulting from drought) that have occurred in this country so far this year may not have been *demonstrably* caused by global warming; these events have, however, been entirely *consistent* with global warming—and that fact should give one pause.

If some of the deniers have been publishing misinformation, and thereby convincing some and confusing others, another unfortunate fact regarding global warming is that so many in our society are simply clueless about it. As one talks with others, reads the newspaper, watches television, etc., one rarely encounters others who seem even somewhat informed about the topic, or concerned about the implications that may be associated with global warming. One would think that Hurricane Katrina would have been a "wake up" call for many in our society, given that the occurrence of severe hurricanes is entirely consistent with the existence of global warming; but it appears not to have been. As just one example, *60 Minutes* tonight (July 10, 2011) had a segment on deriving natural gas from shale rock. Neither the interviewer (Lesley Stahl) nor anyone interviewed evinced any concern for global warming. Someone mentioned that natural gas is less polluting than other fossil fuels—which is true—but failed to note that its

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Global Warming. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010; and Haydn Washington and John Cook, *Climate Change Denial: Heads in the Sand*. Washington, DC: Earthscan, 2011.

[161] A noted scientist with NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

burning still results in the emission of carbon dioxide—thereby contributing to global warming.

In discussing global warming, a useful beginning point is simply to note that the earth[162] has an atmosphere (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atmosphere_of_Earth), and this atmosphere not only *enables* life on earth (through its heat retention—i.e., "greenhouse effect" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenhouse_effect)—and the particular gases present), but *protects* life. I should add that the atmosphere itself is almost entirely a product of the activities of living organisms at the earth's surface.

Oxygen (essential for human life) constitutes about 21 % (by volume) of our atmosphere, and carbon dioxide (essential for plant life—and thereby indirectly essential for human life as well) about 0.04 %. Although carbon dioxide (CO_2) constitutes but a small portion of atmospheric gases, it is important not only for plant life, but important as a "greenhouse gas." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/IPCC_list_of_greenhouse_gases) That is, (a) solar radiation striking earth (and absorbed by land, buildings, water, etc.) is short-wave, (b) heat energy emitted by earth in turn is long-wave, and (c) thereby absorbed by certain gases, such as carbon dioxide. Such gases are referred to as "greenhouse gases" because, in playing a role similar to that of greenhouse glass, they are involved in heating the atmosphere. Thus, carbon dioxide is not only essential for plant life (and thereby *indirectly* essential for human life); its role in heating the atmosphere is of *direct* importance for human existence.

English scientist James Lovelock has concluded, as a result of his research and reasoning, that (a) earth's atmosphere has evolved over time, at some point acquiring characteristics that enabled it to support species such as the human species.[163] In addition, (b) he has concluded that earth behaves as if it were itself a living entity, for earth seems to be somehow equipped (like a human body) with (1) *negative* feedback mechanisms that "work" to keep it on an "even keel," and (2) *positive* feedback mechanisms that behave in a self-destructive manner if and when the system is stressed beyond some "tipping point." This led Lovelock—at the suggestion of a neighbor (William Golding, author of *Lord of the Flies*)—to refer to earth as *Gaia* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia_(mythology)) the goddess of earth, although Lovelock was

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[162] Now being referred to as "Eaarth" by Bil McKibben! See his *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet.* New York: Times Books, 2010. The basis for this renaming is the fact that the change that has *already* occurred is so significant that a new name is warranted. See Paul Greenberg http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/books/review/Greenberg-t.html.

[163] An interesting point relative to the view that evolution has occurred on earth is that prior to there being an atmosphere one could say that the situation was "natural," when plant life began one could say that the new situation was "natural," when humans appeared, one could say that *that* new situation was "natural," etc. Given these facts, it might appear that it is unreasonable for me to assert (e.g., see my http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/04/our-primary-problem/ and http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/05/some-uses-of-biology-three-perspectives/) that human life today is, for most of us, "unnatural." However, what I mean by that is that prior to the Agricultural Revolution there occurred a co-development of humans as biological entities and the gatherer-hunter way of life—meaning that each "fit" the others. Since that time, however, our ways of life have changed drastically while our biology has remained basically the same—resulting in a "discrepancy" between the way of life for which we had become "designed" and the way of life that we actually have. (As James Lovelock has noted, "We are perfectly evolved to live as hunter-gatherers." *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning*. New York: Basic Books, 2009, p. 80). Which fact could very well be the root of virtually all of our problems! Because of this, I believe that it is perfectly reasonable to state that our present way of life is "unnatural." (I am puzzled that Lovelock, in noting that we still are "designed" to be gatherer-hunters, oes not—if would seem—see the fact that we *aren't* a serious problem.)

not, of course, suggesting that earth was *literally* a living being.

If earth is able to regulate itself, and thereby incidentally enable life to exist on earth (unlike our near neighbors in the universe, Mercury and Mars), it does not follow from that fact that that ability is absolute. If its system is "shocked" sufficiently (e.g., as a result of volcanic eruptions), it will be "thrown out of kilter," but may be able to return to "normal" after a certain period of time. There remains the possibility, however, that a "shock" received by earth would be so severe that Gaia would, in effect, "die"—in the sense of changing so drastically as to be no longer able to support life. Such a "shock" could come from various sources, but the most important one for us (from a human control standpoint) is human activities (including breathing![164]) which result in the addition of carbon dioxide (and other greenhouse gases) to the atmosphere. In fact, the "global warming" that has been occurring appears to be largely a consequence of human activities.

I'll comment further on that matter shortly, but first would like briefly to discuss a few historical developments relative to global warming research, beginning with Jean Baptiste Joseph Fourier [1768 – 1830] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Fourier) Fourier can be said to have been the discoverer of the greenhouse effect, for .in the 1820s he (a mathematician and physicist) calculated that given earth's size and distance from the sun, it should be much colder than it is. Fourier guessed that various factors might be responsible for this fact, including the possibility that earth's atmosphere was somehow acting as an insulator. Fourier was not, however, able to provide a definitive answer as to why earth was warmer than it "should be."

To Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius [1859 – 1927] (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Svante_Arrhenius) must be given credit for providing basic understanding of the "greenhouse effect." In attempting to learn why ice ages had occurred, Arrhenius speculated that there had been changes in the atmosphere's carbon dioxide content over time, and that this variation is what caused variations in earth's temperature. In formulating this hypothesis, he had drawn upon previous work by other scientists, Josef Stefan [1835 – 1893] and Stefan's student Ludwig Boltzmann [1844 – 1906] in particular. Arrhenius did not, however, make note of a change occurring in earth's temperature during his lifetime—in part (I would assume) because his interests lay elsewhere, in part because such a change was not notable then.

The concept of "global *warming*" did not arise until after Charles David Keeling [1928 – 2005] began measuring carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, using an instrument that he had himself developed while at California Institute of Technology ("Caltech") in Pasadena, California. The measurements that he made while in California indicated an increase in CO_2 level over time, and as Keeling saw significance in that fact he decided—with the help and encouragement of Roger Revelle, Director of the Scripps Institution of Oceanography—to establish a recording station on Mauna Loa, Hawaii (a location chosen for its relative isolation from nearby sources of carbon dioxide emissions). A graph indicating recordings at that site (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_David_Keeling) indicates a definite trend in CO_2 increase since Keeling began recording values in 1958. (I find it of interest that the May 2011 reading of

[164] Lovelock (*op. cit.*, p. 74) has stated that "the exhalations of breath and other gaseous emissions by the nearly 7 billion people on Earth, their pets, and their livestock are responsible for 23 percent of all greenhouse emissions."

CO_2 was 394.16, the June reading slightly less, 393.69; see http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/. Also of interest here is historical data; see http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/historical-trends-in-carbon-dioxide-concentrations-and-temperature-on-a-geological-and-recent-time-scale.

The data collected at this station in Hawaii indicated that whereas the CO_2 level in 1958 had been 315 parts per million (ppm), by 2005 it had climbed to 380 ppm. Keeling noted that this rise was correlated with fossil fuel emissions, so that given that those emissions could basically be attributable to the *burning* of fossil fuels by humans (as opposed to other possible sources). This conclusion has enabled scientists—in noting that the earth's mean *temperature* has also been rising—to reach the very reasonable conclusion that that heating has principally resulted as a consequence of human use of fossil fuels. That is, the global warming that is occurring—and there's no question that it *has been*—is largely "anthropogenic."

Climate science research subsequent to Keeling's empirical findings falls into several categories, and I will give attention to five of them here. First, scientists have determined that in addition to CO_2 such gases as water vapor, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone are greenhouse gases (see, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greenhouse_gas.) Indeed, it has been determined that methane is an especially effective greenhouse gas, being about 20 times more effective than carbon dioxide.

Second, the modeling of climate change data has occupied the attention of a number of researchers over the past few years. The following site (of the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, EPA) (http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/futuretc.html#ref) presents a number of projections for the period between now and 2100 CE, and it can be noted here that there are (regarding "emission scenarios") lines for constant CO_2, low growth, moderate growth, and high growth. The reason for the multiple lines is that even if one has a model that predicts *past* changes in temperature accurately, it does not follow that one can use that model to predict *future* changes—for the simple reason that the future values that one "plugs" into one's model as explanatory (i.e., X) variables will, of necessity, be *guesses*, not *facts*; they are not facts because, in pertaining to the "not yet," they *cannot* be. The EPA states (on the above site) that (using the period 1980 – 1990 as the reference point) it's possible that the temperature increase to 2100 CE will be from 2 to 11 °F., with the most likely increase being between 3.2 and 7.2 °F. Models created by other agencies or individuals would be expected to produce different results, of course.

The web site established by Robert A. Rohle (a Ph. D. student, in Physics, at the University of California-Berkeley is extremely useful in that it provides numerous graphs, charts, and links (http://www.globalwarmingart.com/wiki/File:Global_Warming_Predictions_png). For example, he presents the following chart, with information derived from eight different climate science groups:

Temperature Increase 2000 to 2100 (°C)			
Model	**Total**	**Land**	**Ocean**
CCSR/NIES	4.7	7.0	3.8
CCCma	4.0	5.0	3.6
CSIRO	3.8	4.9	3.4
Hadley Centre	3.7	5.5	3.0
GFDL	3.3	4.2	3.0
MPI-M	3.0	4.6	2.4
NCAR PCM	2.3	3.1	2.0
NCAR CSM	2.2	2.7	2.0
Mean	**3.4**	**4.6**	**2.9**

(I will identify just two of the above groups here: CCSR/NIES is for Center for Climate System Research/Nationl Institute for Environmental Studies, in Japan; NCAR CSM is for National Center for Atmospheric Research Climate System Model (United States).

Notice, with these different models, that the variation in land temperature varies from 2.7 to 7.0 °C, the variation in ocean temperature from 2.0 to 3.8 °C, with the total variation varying between 2.2 and 4.7 °C. Some might be tempted to interpret this variation as proof that climate scientists don't know what they are doing—and there is some merit in such a conclusion, in the sense that climate science is a *maturing*, not a *mature*, science at present. Apart from that fact, however, there is the fact that making projections regarding future situations/events is inherently difficult, given that projections are, of necessity, always based on some unknowns.

It would seem that the sensible way of perceiving these variations is to recognize that although

they differ one from another, they all project an *increase* in mean temperature; none predicts either no change or decrease. Second, although a 2.2 °C change, e.g., between 2000 and 2100 may seem like a small change, in fact it represents a huge amount of heat energy. When most of us think of such a change, we are thinking of the change at our *particular location* on a particular day—in which case the amount of change is only detectable with a thermometer. When the *entire earth* is the object of measurement, however, the meaning of a 2.2 °C change is entirely different—a matter that I comment on shortly.

Before doing so, however, I would like to note that James Lovelock, as a result of some experimentation, determined that "suddenly, between 400 and 500 ppm of carbon dioxide, a small increase of heat or carbon dioxide causes a sudden nine-degree rise of temperature." Lovelock went on to note: "The Earth's atmospheric greenhouse is now well above 400 ppm (carbon dioxide is near 390 ppm but methane, nitrous oxide and the CFCs lift the total effect to nearer that of 430 ppm carbon dioxide)."[165] (Lovelock's reference here is to what climate scientists refer to as the "carbon dioxide equivalent" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carbon_dioxide_equivalent.)

In discussing models I should note that James Lovelock has been critical of many of the modeling efforts to date, on the basis that they "are limited by a climate theory based almost wholly on atmospheric physics, and even this is far from complete."[166] As a consequence of their deficiencies in assumptions, Lovelock notes that "as I write this in 2008, more than one thousand of the world's best climate scientists have worked for seventeen years to forecast future climates and have failed to predict the climate of today"[167]—a serious deficiency, indeed!

Given that the concepts of negative and positive feedback are key ones in Lovelock's thinking about earth, he has advocated for their inclusion in climate models. Associated with the concepts of negative and positive feedback is the concept of non-linearity—the idea that (in this case) rather than temperature increasing at a steady (in trend terms) rate over time, it is likely to increase at an *accelerating* rate—if a certain mean temperature for earth is reached. Put another way, there is the possibility of a "tipping point" which, if reached, will be followed by a period of rapid increase. Uncontrollable rapid increase (very possibly), in fact.[168] Thus, it is incumbent on us humans to do what we can to prevent that from happening.

Which leads, third, to an interesting question: If humans were, beginning tomorrow, to cease emitting greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, what would happen? I posed this question to GISS scientist (see endnote 3) Gavin A. Schmidt, and here's what he emailed back to me: "There is no 'immediate' effect of ceasing CO2 emissions on temperature." However, if one considers not only CO_2 emissions but other ones as well, "the immediate effect of ceasing all emissions (including CH4, NOx, VOCs, SO2, etc.) would have an impact—but that would be

[165] *Op. cit*., p. 52.

[166] *Op. cit*., p. 40.

[167] *Op. cit*., p. 7.

[168] See, e. g., Dahr Jamail http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2011/06/23 and Gaia Vince . http://www.trec-uk.org.uk/articles/NS_2009-02-25.html.

one of warming! (because the short-lived species have a net cooling effect)." Lovelock explains this by noting that "atmospheric aerosol . . . reflects sunlight back to space and makes global warming less severe than it might otherwise be." And adds that IPCC contributors Peter Cox and Meinrat Andreae, in a *Nature* paper, "warned that if the haze disappeared, global heating would intensify, and dangerous change could be the consequence."[169]

The latter conclusion seemingly leads one to believe that "we're damned if we do, and damned if we don't!" And there is merit in such a conclusion. But the proper conclusion to draw from such a conclusion is "let's get on with it, and the sooner the better." Doing what? I'll address that question right after briefly discussing consequences of global warming.

Fifth, then, is the matter of consequences, and it is useful to think of there being at least two levels of consequences, direct and indirect. Direct consequences would include the following:[170]

- At some point in time—and at some locations—temperatures may become so warm, for extended periods, as to be unbearable.
- There will be more storms, and more severe storms.
- The flooding of rivers will become more common..
- Tsunamis will become more common.
- As drought affects certain areas, fires will become more common.
- Diseases will spread.
- Migrations from seacoast areas will be necessary as sea level rises.
- Animal migrations (caused by loss of habitat) may occur (and result in animal attacks in some areas).
- Food supplies will be diminished as some areas become less arable (e.g., desertification, increased rainfall), hail destroys crops, etc.—resulting in increased cost of food, to the point that it becomes unaffordable by many.

[169] *Op. cit*., pp. 50 – 51.

[170] For further discussion see http://www.environmentalgraffiti.com/sciencetech/5-deadliest-effects-of-global-warming/276

- Violence may become a serious problem as more and more people become desperate.[171]

The indirect results of the above events are most important to humans, and include property damage (and the costs therewith associated), increased suffering, and a severe culling of the human population.[172]

For example, James Lovelock—who favors technological approaches to the global warming problem—"fears [that] we won't invent the necessary technologies in time, and expects 'about 80%' of the world's population to be wiped out by 2100. Prophets have been foretelling Armageddon since time began [not quite true!], he says. 'But this is the real thing.'"[173]

Such a prediction is scary. But even more so is Dr. Erik R. Pianca's recommendation of a deliberate 90% culling of the human population! (http://www.prisonplanet.com/articles/april2006/030406massculling.htm) I hope that Dr. Pianca meant this as a "tongue in cheek" recommendation, but have no way of knowing whether or not it was. (Also see http://www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2006/1807002.htm#transcript.)

Lovelock's "80% figure" was given in 2008. In his 2009 book (*op. cit.*) he states (p. 6) "we do have to take seriously the possibility that global heating may all but eliminate people from Earth." And (p. 33): "The climate war could kill nearly all of us and leave the few survivors living a Stone Age existence." And (pp. 247 - 248): "Our first imperative is to survive, but soon we face the appalling question of whom we can let aboard the lifeboats? And whom must we reject? There will be no ducking this question for before long there will be a great clamor from climate refugees seeking a safe haven in those few parts where the climate is tolerable and food is available."

Even if one views Lovelock as somewhat of an alarmist, the fact that the vast majority of climate scientists (a) believe that global warming is occurring and (b) poses severe risks for our species (to say nothing of other species, of course) should suggest to us that we take global warming seriously.

How, sixth, should we respond. I am going to keep my comments here short by simply noting that two basic approaches can be used—that of *mitigation* efforts and that of *adaptation* ones. As both of those topics are discussed well in Lovelock's book (among many others), I am simply going to suggest here that the reader explore that literature.

The recommendations that I offer in Parts IV and V can be thought of responding to this

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[171] See, e.g., Ed Vulliamy, "Ciudad Juarez is All Our Futures. This is the Inevitable War of Capitalism Gone Mad": http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/jun/20/war-capitalism-mexico-drug-cartels. Vulliamy concluded his article by quoting from Charles Bowden's *Murder City: Ciudad Juarez and the Global Economy's New Killing Fields*. (New York: Nation Books, 2010) "Juarez [Mexico] is not a breakdown of the social order. Juarez is the new order."

[172] Lovelock (*op. cit.*, p. 31) states regarding dangers: "Our gravest dangers are not from climate change itself, but indirectly from starvation, competition for space and resources, and war."

[173] See "Enjoy Life While You Can" http://www.guardian.co.uk/theguardian/2008/mar/01/scienceofclimatechange.climatechange

statement by Paul Gilding, former head of Greenpeace International: "We have the opportunity to build a society that represents our highest capacities, with extreme poverty eliminated; great technology that works *with* rather than against nature and provides us with abundant energy and resources; a closed-loop economy with no waste; communities that work and support one another; happiness, satisfaction, and service as the central approach of 'money=happier people.'"[174]

The recommendations that I offer involve *both* mitigation and adaptation, but are also—and simultaneously—addressed to problems in addition to global warming—i.e., the problems that global warming can be expected to *cause*. Before presenting those recommendations, however, I use Part III to describe what might be thought of as the "philosophical basis" of those recommendations.

Part III: "Where I'm Coming From"

The proposals offered in Part IV and (especially) Part V are based on reasoning from scientific findings. They are also, however, rooted in such factors as intuition, upbringing, and life experiences. For that reason, it is desirable to give some attention to some of the "other" factors underlying those proposals—with the current Part III having that purpose. In doing so, it's likely that I have overlooked certain influences on my thinking, and I apologize in advance if I have done so. My excuse is that I am a human being, not a machine. Besides, I lack the fantastic memory ("hyperthymesia") of my famous relative Brad Williams.[175] (http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/OnCall/story?id=4135634&page=1).

Although an essay is not a scientific report, the first point I would make is that I have attempted to base my recommendations in scientific fact. Not being a climate scientist, I may have made some misinterpretations of what I have read by such scientists, or works about their works by

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[174] *The Great Disruption: Why the Climate Crisis Will Bring On the End of Shopping and the Birth of a New World*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011, p. 7.

[175] Brad's father, Griffith (http://unforgettabledoc.wordpress.com/tag/brad-williams/), had grown up on a farm near Mt. Morris, one previously owned by my dad's father. When my dad's father contracted tuberculosis around 1920, the family sold the farm to the Williamses (Mrs. Williams was the daughter of my grandfather's sister!), and moved to San Bernardino, California, where my dad attended high school. (The reason the family chose San Bernardino was that dad's mother had been in the employ of the Otto Schnering family, Otto being founder of the Curtis Candy Company—which still makes Baby Ruth, Butterfinger, etc.—in Chicago prior to her marriage, and had traveled around the country with them, including to California. Dad's brother—Otto Raymond—was named for Mr. Schnering, but always went by "Ray.") After high school, dad worked for awhile as a draftsman , then at some point (the chronology is not clear here) moved to the Walla Walla area of Washington State to work on a "wheat ranch." After working there for awhile, he returned to Mt. Morris, staying with the Williamses and working on their farm (i.e., his dad's former farm!). In 1933 he married my mom, who lived on a nearby farm.

For a time during my youth (the mid 1940s) my family was a near neighbor of the Williamses, but Griffith had already left home by that time, having graduated from high school in 1934 (and then moved to Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin). I never knew Griffith, but knew, and worked with, his brother Kenneth (recently deceased). Brad is a distant relative: my father's (Marvin C. Thompson) father's (Charles K. Thompson) sister's (Tomena Thompson) daughter's (Gertie M. ("Mabel") Hanson), son's (Griffith Williams) son.

professional writers. But insofar as that is the case, it has little if any relevance for my recommendations, for my main points regarding global warming—for the purposes of Parts IV and V—are that (a) global warming is occurring and (b) can be expected to continue to occur, (c) with that occurrence having serious consequences. Consequences of which we should be aware so that we can, on the one hand, initiate efforts at mitigation (i.e., efforts to cease contributing to the problem) and, on the other hand plan, act to adapt, as well as we can, to the changes that are in the offing.

Second, as one who grew up in the United States (south central Wisconsin—in or near Mt. Morris, Wautoma, and Wild Rose), and has always lived in this country, I have inevitably acquired certain mental traits from that experience. For example, in growing up "close to the land," I acquired a love of Nature. For a time I lived on a slope of Mt. Morris[176] (in the area that my ancestors had settled in the early 1850s), and as a child enjoyed roaming the slopes of that "mountain" (which fact helps explain why I minored in Geology while an undergraduate). (I should note that Mt. Morris is hardly a mountain, rising only about 250 feet above the surrounding area!)

The fact that I grew up in a rural-small town environment also means that, as a child, I was not exposed to extremes of wealth. The family I grew up in was by no means rich, but I never went without a meal, and was never made to feel that I was somehow inferior to others. I knew that my friend's parents made more money than mine did, but that fact didn't seem to make any difference to them—and therefore didn't make any difference to me. One of my brothers (I have three) had a friend who was from one of the wealthiest families in that area, but his parents (mother in particular) were some of the friendliest, kindest persons that you would want to meet.

The fact that I grew up in the *United States* influenced me in that I early on became aware that so long as my behavior was lawful, I could do about anything I wanted to—within the limits of local mores, of course. It also made me aware of the fact that I have certain *rights*—of speech, assembly, religion, the right to a fair trial—etc., and that fact has made me sensitive to any perceived infringement of those rights. Although I have owned guns (a rifle, shotgun, and pistol), and was a hunter (and fisherman) in my youth, I have always believed that it was only sensible that there be restrictions as to where guns should and should not be present; therefore, I have never been a member of the National Rifle Association (NRA), or had any of their stickers on the automobiles that I have owned.

Regarding rights, one of my favorite movies is *The Majestic* (2001), especially this portion (http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0268995/quotes):

> **Peter Appleton** [Jim Carrey]: The 5th Ammendment is out of the question. But there is another Ammendment I'd like to invoke. I wonder if anyone here is

[176] Mt Morris is described (in part) this way in Lawrence Martin's *The Physical Geography of Wisconsin* (1916), pp. 311 - 312 (http://www.archive.org/details/physicalgeograph00martrich): "Mt. Morris is in the midst of glaciated territory. Its flat top is bestrewn with granite boulders, carried there by ice. Its moderately sloping sides reveal ledges of sandstone, but there are none of the craigs and pinnacles that must have characterized the hill before the Glacial Period." Martin's reference to "craigs and pinnacles" is an allusion to Roche a Cri, a geological formation similar to Mt. Morris, 40 miles to the west (in the "Driftless Area," i.e., the unglaciated portion of Wisconsin).

familiar with it. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion."

Congressman Doyle [Hal Holbrook]: You're out of order!
Peter Appleton: "Shall make no law... respecting - "
Congressman Doyle: My chamber will come to order!
Peter Appleton: "An establishment of religion... or prohibiting free exercise thereof... or abridging freedom of speech, or of the press... or of the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances."
Congressman Doyle: Do not presume to lecture this Committee!
Peter Appleton: The First Ammendment. It's what we're about, if we'd live up to it. It's part of the contract every citizen has here. Even though the Constitution and the Bill of Rights... are just pieces of paper with signatures on them... they're the only contracts that we have that are defintely not subject... to renegotiation. Not by you, Mr.Chairman.
Congressman Doyle: Mr.Appleton!
Peter Appleton: Not by you, Mr. Clyde [played by Bob Balaban].
Congressman Doyle: Stand down!
Peter Appleton: Not by anyone, ever. Too many people have paid in blood.
Congressman Doyle: Enough, sir! You are out of order!
Peter Appleton: [*holds up Luke's Congressional Medal of Honor*] People like Luke Trimble... and all the sons of Lawson, California. And they deserve better than this.
Stan Keller [James Whitmore]: [*in tears to the patrons listening in Mabel's Diner* {Mabel was played by Catherine Dent*} in Lawson*] Goddamn right! They deserve better! [*looks at Bob* {i.e., Bob Leffert, played by Karl Bury} *working the grill*]
Stan Keller: All you boys do...
Congressman Doyle: [*banging his gavel*] I will have order or I will clear this chamber!
Peter Appleton: When you get right down to it, fellas... that's all I have to say to you.
[*turns and leaves the courtroom*]

Third, I was raised in Christianity—and over my life have had exposure to at least 12 different Christian denominations. It is perhaps that varied exposure (along with exposure to some Jews, both secular and religious, and a few Moslems) that helps explain why the view that I have developed of Christianity is one that emphasizes ortho*praxy* (proper behavior) over ortho*doxy* (proper belief). That is my *belief system* (so far as religion is concerned) has a behavioral orientation. We all have religious beliefs (including *non*-religious beliefs!), but the problem with publicizing them is that our beliefs create barriers between people—a statement that even applies to publicizing one's belief in orthopraxy!

Although I recognize that *rights* are important, it is possible to place too much emphasis in them; if allowed free reign, they can lead to over-emphasis of one's own self at the expense of others, one result being the emergence of a highly inegalitarian society. I have come to realize, therefore, that *rights* must be balanced with a recognition of one's *responsibilities*, *duties*. My

parents were regular church-goers, and in part I learned this principle from them. From them I also learned that there were more important things in life than making money, and I am thankful for that. In addition, however, I learned this principle from my teachers, my reading, and my life experiences.

The (Christian) Bible has long been an important book for me, but primarily from the perspective of orthopraxy. Thus, the "Am I my brother's keeper?"[177] of Genesis 4:9 I regard as a rhetorical question. And one of my favorite passages that expresses that viewpoint is Job 29:12 – 17 (http://www.biblestudytools.com/job/29.html) :

> . . . I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him. **13** The man who was dying blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing. **14** I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban. **15** I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. **16** I was a father to the needy; I took up the case of the stranger.

There is a similar passage in Matthew 25:35 – 45, in which one is encouraged (by implication—and four times!) to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome strangers, clothe the naked, tend to the sick, and visit those who are (unjustly only?) in prison.

In addition, another of my favorite movies is *Chocolat* (2000), with one of my favorite segments in that movie being this part of the Easter Sermon delivered by Pere Henri (played by Hugh O'Conor):

> I want to talk about Christ's humanity, I mean how he lived his life on earth: his kindness, his tolerance. We must measure our goodness, not by what we don't do, what we deny ourselves, what we resist, or who we exclude. Instead, we should measure ourselves by what we embrace, what we create, and who we include.

My particular view of Christianity means that I admire people such as Elissa Montani (founder of Global Medical Relief Fund) (http://www.gmrfchildren.org/) and Steve Lopez, whose efforts to help a mentally disturbed homeless man was made into a wonderful movie, *The Soloist*[178] (http://www.soloistmovie.com/), starring Robert Downey, Jr., as Steve, and Jamie Foxx (who turned in a brilliant performance!) as Nathaniel Ayers. I'm sure that there are thousands—if not hundreds of thousands—of similar people in our country at present, most of them unheralded—because they are not interested in publicity and fame. If the Good Society existed at present, we wouldn't need such people—but it doesn't, and we do! What's unfortunate is that so few of them are in positions of authority!

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[177] See, e.g., http://executableoutlines.com/text/gen4_9.htm).

[178] I like the tagline associated with this movie: "No one changes anything by playing it safe."

Related to this, fourth, I have a different sort of admiration for Myron W. Reed [1836 – 1899].[179] Unfortunately, the book[180] from which I have derived my information for Reed leaves much to be desired: it is not well organized, and has a number of "holes"—including the fact that the author refers to Reed as a "radical" (in his title), and even a "crank" (in the title of his Part Three), without ever clarifying why he thinks such labels are appropriate.

Reed was born in Vermont, his father being a poor Congregationalist minister, and both parents being active abolitionists. During his youth, he was involved in a family dispute, and—being an independent-minded young man—left home and (p. 4)" tried to find his own way in the world."—first signing on with a fishing vessel.

In the mid 1850s his family moved from upper New York state (where they were then living) to Wisconsin (*where* in the state, the author does not say), Reed reconciled with his parents, and joined them in Wisconsin. While there, he farmed, did as much reading as he could, became friends with some nearby members of a Chippewa tribe, hunted and fished with them, and through that contact (p. 5) "learned about Native American culture and the injustices forced upon them by federal bureaucrats and unscrupulous Indian agents." When he later moved West, he became "a vocal defender of Native American rights."

Prior to the Civil War Reed studied law, passed the bar in Wisconsin, and practiced law for a time. However, in 1861 he entered Chicago Theological Seminary, but with the war on, he joined the army in 1862, serving until the end of the war. He (p. 5) "cherished the war experience because of the camaraderie and loyalty to the troops" (a sentiment that William James would have been able to relate to!). In the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Reed had served as a chaplain, and he (p. 5) "always considered the GAR an organization that nourished manliness, interdependence, and patriotism—values that he prized."

After the war, Reed returned to the seminary in Chicago, receiving his degree in 1868. Upon graduation he obtained a position as pastor at a Congregational church in New Orleans, and remained there until 1873. While there, he met his future wife (they married in 1870). In 1873, however, they moved to Milwaukee, where he again became a pastor of a church—the Milwaukee Olivet Congregational Church. In 1877, however, they moved to Indianapolis, where Reed became minister of a Presbyterian church. Then in 1884, the Reeds moved to Denver, where Reed became pastor of a Congregational church; they remained in Denver until Reed died in 1899.

In a1892 sermon Reed declared that there ought to be a new society, and (p. 3) "what ought to be will be." For "a new social order was inevitable—it was God's will." And because of the "fluid social and political structures" in the West at that time, Reed believed that the West was "the ideal place to build a cooperative society based on Christian socialism." In addition, Reed believed (p. 19) that the economic crises that had occurred in the 1890s would provide an environment favorable for the achievement of such a cooperative society.

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[179] For a picture of Reed see http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=sh&GRid=13165270.

[180] James A. Denton, *Rocky Mountain Radical: Myron W. Reed, Christian Socialist*. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1997.

Reed's "socialism" had little, if any, relationship with the socialism that was developing in Europe under the influence of Karl Marx and others. Rather, Reed's "socialism" had its basis in his interpretation of the Bible, along with American intellectual currents—such as the publication of Edward Bellamy's famous utopian novel, *Looking Backward* (1888). (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Bellamy) Reed believed (p. vii) that the role of the churches was to "guide humanity into the promised kingdom of God on earth, which was best represented by a cooperative republic. Teaching by example meant doing the things that would create justice, relieve suffering, elevate culture to its fullest potential [[181]], and establish small communities that would serve as catalysts to prod the rest of society toward the kingdom of God." From a theological standpoint, Reed's orientation was to the New Theology of the 1880s (http://books.google.com/books/about/The_new_theology.html?id=qsdFAAAAIAAJ and http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/5061655).

In his preaching Reed (p. 30) emphasized the present, not an afterlife. He tried (p. 34) to appeal to all (and in fact "attracted all kinds of people"), and had "compassion for any luckless person he chanced to meet." He (p. 41) "accentuated doing rather than being, discussed everyday themes, and framed bits of wisdom and humor in epigrams that his listeners quickly grasped."

In 1894 (p. 117) the famous Cripple Creek strike occurred, and this resulted in Reed looking at the strike *per se* more favorably than he had before as a weapon in labor's struggle against "capitalism" (i.e., capitalists). This position was, however, not popular with his parishioners, and he was forced to resign his position—his sermon "Laws Favor Wealth" evidently being the decisive factor.

The author noted (p. 143) that "as time passed, socialism proved unable to ignite the changes Reed hoped to see," adding that a factor that contributed to Reed's failure was (p. vii) the dominance of *laissez-faire* [http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/04/dissecting-laissez-faire-%E2%80%9Ctheory%E2%80%9D/] thinking in the West. I would agree that the intellectual atmosphere in the West was not, at that time, conducive to the realization of Reed's ideas. But the author provides no evidence that Reed ever developed any practical plans or tried to implement his ideas; thus, it would seem that Reed's failure was attributable to more than just one factor. Still, despite the fact that Reed was a failure (judged on the basis of his failure to achieve the societal changes that he supposedly wanted to occur), elements of his life have been an inspiration to me.

Fifth, my parents have been an important influence on "who I am." My dad was a builder—a carpenter—who during most of his career worked with a partner, both of them working on a per-hour (rather than contract) basis. That's how it was done in my home area: carpenters worked on that basis, kept track of their hours, then turned their hours in to their employer at the end of the week, expecting that the employer would then write a check for them: there was mutual trust between worker and employer. My dad was a perfectionist, and as a consequence was not a good teacher. None of us boys (there were four of us) learned to be carpenters, although each, in his own way, became involved in construction, if only (in my case!) in an intellectual sense.

[181] An interest that reminds me of James Lovelock's statement: "Not only must we survive but also we must stay civilized and not degenerate into mob rule where gang leaders promote themselves as warlords." *The Vanishing Face Of Gaia: A Final Warning*. New York: Basic Books, 2009, p. 92. I should add that Lovelock's concept of being "civilized" may not coincide exactly with mine.

After my dad's retirement he spent hours working in his shop making things for us kids and others (such as grandfather clocks, rocking chairs, sconces, bowls), and usually simply gave away what he had made. He even acquired, from a junk yard, a wreck of a 1921 Ford automobile, sent here and there for parts to rebuild it—but ended up making it into a truck for lack of all the necessary parts (creating a truck bed out of oak wood). He willed it to the Wild Rose museum when he died, and it is still brought out from time to time for parades. Needless to say, I am proud of the kind of person that my dad was!

I should add that I also gained my interest in religion from my parents. They had been raised in a Norwegian Lutheran church that my ancestors had helped establish in the 1850s, but shortly after marriage left that church and, with the help of several other young couples, established the Assemblies of God church in Wautoma. Thus, I was raised in that church, along with (later, while in my teens) a Conservative Baptist church in Wild Rose (a church most of whose members had a Welsh heritage).

Although I have grown away from the religion of my childhood, I have no regrets in having been exposed to my parents' brand of Christianity. Each of us kids—my three brothers and sister—has gone his (her) own way in religious matters, but our parents never disowned any of us. Perhaps they had the wisdom to recognize that we were simply following their example of being independent-minded!

Finally, there is a book that has had great influence on my thinking, particularly with reference to the proposal that I present and discuss in Parts IV and V, *Flight From the City*,[182] by Ralph Borsodi [1888 – 1977]. The book is available at http://www.soilandhealth.org/03sov/0302hsted/030204borsodi/030204borsodich1.html. The following quotation is taken from Chapter One ("Flight From the City"):

> What are the social, economic, political, and philosophical implications of such a type of living? What would be the consequence of a widespread transference of production from factories to the home?
>
> If enough families were to make their homes economically productive, cash-crop farmers specializing in one crop would have to abandon farming as a business and go back to it as a way of life. The packinghouses, mills, and canneries, not to mention the railroads, wholesalers, and retailers, which now distribute agricultural products would find their business confined to the production and distribution of exotic foodstuffs. Food is our most important industry. A war of attrition, such as we have been carrying on all alone, if extended on a large enough scale, would put the food industry out of its misery, for miserable it certainly is, all the way from the farmers who produce the raw materials to the men, women, and children who toil in the canneries, mills, and packing-towns, and in addition reduce proportionately the congestion, adulteration, unemployment, and unpleasant odors to all of which the food industry contributes liberally.

[182] *Flight From the City: An Experiment in Creative Living on the Land*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1933.

> If enough families were to make their homes economically productive, the textile and clothing industries, with their low wages, seasonal unemployment, cheap and shoddy products, would shrink to the production of those fabrics and those garments which it is impractical for the average family to produce for itself.
>
> If enough families were to make their homes economically productive, undesirable and non-essential factories of all sorts would disappear and only those which would be desirable and essential because they would be making tools and machines, electric light bulbs, iron and copper pipe, wire of all kinds, and the myriad of things which can best be made in factories, would remain to furnish employment to those benighted human beings who prefer to work in factories.
>
> Domestic production, if enough people turned to it, would not only annihilate the undesirable and nonessential factory by depriving it of a market for its products. It would do more. It would release men and women from their present thralldom to the factory and make them masters of machines instead of servants to them; it would end the power of exploiting them which ruthless, acquisitive, and predatory men now possess; it would free them for the conquest of comfort, beauty and understanding.

What Borsodi—an economist—was in effect stating here is that the society (in modern times) is also an economy, and that as such its various parts are all interdependent. If one individual were to withdraw from this system by becoming self-sufficient (i.e., homesteading http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/04/our-primary-problem/), this would mean that that individual would be:

- No longer providing labor support to the system.
- By not making any purchases, not contributing to the continuing "welfare" of the economy (including whatever sales taxes that might exist, and go to support government).
- Paying no income tax to help support the state and federal government.
- Selling nothing to those remaining behind (except for what would be necessary for the payment of a property tax).

The exit of this single individual from the system would, of course, have no discernable impact on the economy/society. However, were the percent of the population making such an exit to increase gradually, a point would be reached where that egress would begin to have an effect:

- Some firms would be forced to shut down—or move to a different location (e.g., a different country)—because of the loss of a market for whatever they were selling. What would the employees then do—especially if the firm leaves for another country?
- Those who left firms to become self-sufficient would leave those firms in need of new employees. Where would they get them (besides from firms in the first category)? They

might be tempted to import labor, but immigration laws might make that difficult. Moving to a different country might, then, be an option; but if a firm's market is a local one (e.g., a bakery, a service activity), such an option would not be a realistic one. If a firm *does* move to a different country, its employees are not likely to follow it there, so what would they (the employees) then do?

- As more and more individuals exit the system, revenues of state governments will decrease, as will those of the federal government. And as firms either shut down or move to a different country, tax revenues from such sources will cease. On the other hand, as more and more become unemployed, more and more of a burden will be placed on governmental units, putting them in a real bind. Governments would need to discontinue many activities, in the process laying off employees—further aggravating the unemployment problem.

- Firms that sell to government units (i.e., "feed off the public trough"!) will find their market shrinking, and will be forced to lay off employees. What will these former employees do then?

- Our military—which has perhaps killed about 1,000,000 Iraqis (http://www.opinion.co.uk/Newsroom_details.aspx?NewsId=120) would of necessity be cut back, for lack of funding. Given that the terrorism that we (i.e., the military and CIA) practice against other countries (http://www.opinion.co.uk/Newsroom_details.aspx?NewsId=120) would necessarily be reduced, there likely would be a decrease in counterterrorist actions against us! So that even we Americans would benefit, not just foreigners, from a significant exit from the Larger Society.

- Etc.

The point here is that this exiting (and perhaps also exciting?!) action on the part of individuals—whether done as individuals or as members of groups (creating communities for themselves)—would, if sufficiently magnified, have significant results. As it is, the individual in our society is vulnerable—often wondering from day to day whether s/he will have a job (there being many in our society at present not having jobs!). But if individuals were to exit the society *en masse* (while remaining in this country), at some point it would become clear that the *society itself* is vulnerable. That is, it is conceivable that the society would collapse—and this could be a "good thing," one not necessarily involving much (if any) hardship to people. During this process people would, of course, be changing their way of life; but if done right, this change could be an *improvement*! Is there anybody here who believes that our society is *not* in need of improvement?!![183]

[183] Paul Street, in reviewing Ha-Joon Chang's *23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism* (2010) states: "Capitalism, Chang proclaims, is 'the worst economic system in the world, except for all the others' and 'still the best economic system that humanity has invented.' Well, then, with all due respect, we had better damn well invent

If the individuals exiting the society are self-interested "survivalists," their exit, if magnified, would have negative consequences. If, however, those exiting perceive that they have an *opportunity* to create a New Society, and take advantage of that opportunity, the eventual result could be of a very positive nature. There are no guarantees, however!

When I referred, in my "Prefatory Note" for Part I (http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/07/toward-a-new-moral-equivalent-of-war/), to "Sorelian myth,"[184] the above is what I meant. That is, I was asserting that if people can *believe* that some Big Project is both necessary and feasible, and if a presentation of such a Project causes them to imagine/visualize the process of implementation, the Project may "grab" people, and result in their developing ideas relative to such a Project, ideas that they are willing and eager to work on. Doing so—in effect, engaging in a revolution!—without thought of engaging in violence, and in a spirit of not only helping themselves but others as well—so that the transition would involve little or no pain.

Impossible? Time will tell! In Parts IV and V I develop my ideas on the matter. As James Lovelock has noted, we Americans have plenty of know-how and a can-do attitude;[185] I would therefore like to think that we are up to the challenge!

Part IV: Introducing My Proposal

> Our intention was to stimulate interest and discussion on physiological techniques that would use the Earth system's energy and nutrient resources to reverse global warming.[186]

Reactions to the phenomenon of global warming have been varied.

- Many in our midst simply deny that it is occurring (e.g., Denis Rancourt http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/03/the-lie-of-climate-change-science/). I have strong doubts that they are right (else why would I be writing these essays?!), and have no

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a new and better system—a democratic, participatory, and egalitarian one." Street then cites Mike Albert's *Parecon: Life After Capitalism* (2003) and Stanley Aronowitz's *Left Turn: Forging a New Political Future* (2006). I would like to think that Parts IV and V of this series present a "new and better system."

[184] The following has been said regarding Sorel by Jonah Goldberg http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/121839/sorel-general-strike/jonah-goldberg): "It's my understanding—subject to correction—that Sorel did not actually take a firm position on whether or not a General Strike would, in fact, work. Rather he argued that it was the *Myth* of the General Strike which was all important. The Myth was a form of Plato's noble lie. The masses needed to have a religious faith that the General Strike would usher in utopian socialism, but whether or not it would in fact be successful in doing that he remained at best agnostic. He rejected "social scientific" Marxism as a fool's errand and was generally unconvinced by literal Marxist prophecy. Rather, he wanted such prophesies to be seen through a secular religious prism." See also this essay by Lee Harris: http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/956331/posts.

[185] *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

[186] James Lovelock, *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning*. New York: Basic Books, 2009, p. 148. The "our" here refers to the fact that in 2007 Lovelock and Chris Rapley "suggested the use of a system of large pipes held vertically in the ocean surface to draw up cooler, nutrient-rich water from just below the thermocline."

illusions that many of them can be "converted." At any rate, I am not writing for such individuals.

- Some acknowledge that global warming is occurring, but are so fixated on the short-run that their response is that doing anything to reduce, if not halt, further emissions of greenhouse gases would hurt the economy. If the economy must continue to be structured in the way it is now, they have a point. But if global warming is actually occurring—as I believe it is—the implication is that our economy will be changing *even if we don't want it to change*; and in doing so is likely to experience chaotic conditions. Given that possibility, my response is that we should plan *now* for change, and begin implementing those plans—to minimize the chaos that likely will be involved with the transition.

- Others accept the possibility that global warming is occurring, but are so "into" neo-classical Economics that they are convinced that "the market" will automatically solve the problem. People who think this way are saying, in effect: "We don't want to be forthright in noting *who* is making *what* decisions (yes, *decisions*!) for what nefarious *purposes*." That is, there is more than a hint of dishonesty—or is it ignorance?!—associated with the use of the term "market." I would add here that fellow Wisconite Thorstein Veblen [1857 – 1929] "believed that the main ideological function of neoclassical economics [with its "market" concept] was to obfuscate structures of domination and exploitation and, it might be noted, waste."[187] I fear that if we allow "the market" to solve this problem, we will end with a situation comparable to the sorry homes that Mike Holmes fixes, as presented on the television program *Holmes on Homes* (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holmes_on_Homes)!

- Still others accept the reality of global warming, but reject the suggestion that "the market" will "save" us in favor of the argument that our salvation lies with technology. James Lovelock (who has lent his support to this option) has provided us with an excellent discussion of solutions having their basis in technology.[188] I would add that I am in partial agreement with Lovelock—with the proviso that we recognize that a given such solution may result in other problems, so that pursuit of this option must proceed with care. Basically, however, my position is that technological solutions should be implemented in conjunction with the solution that I propose in this essay and (particularly) the next essay. Why? Because the solution that I offer is broader in scope than any technological solution.

[187] Rick Tilman, *Thorstein Veblen and His Critics, 1891 – 1963: Conservative, Liberal, and Radical Perspectives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 15.

[188] *Op. cit*. See his chapters 4 ("Energy and Food Sources," pp. 99 – 138) and 5 ("Geoengineering," pp. 139 – 158).

My starting point here is to recognize that the most important problem facing us Americans—indeed, us humans—at present is that of global warming—for continued global warming threatens our very existence as a species (to say nothing of other species, of course). However, as one thinks about our country, one must admit we have numerous other problems—ones that are more clearly of an immediate nature, some of them being:

- Unemployment (a problem with which the Republicans seem to be obsessed) (Just kidding!)
- Home foreclosures (to be followed more and more by business closedowns).
- Homelessness.
- Poverty
- Civil rights violations.
- Prejudice/discrimination.
- Extreme inequality in income.
- Alcoholism.
- An addiction to gambling.
- Drug abuse.
- Cancer, heart problems, and other health issues.
- Teen pregnancies.
- Rape.
- Spousal and child abuse.
- A lack of rights for gays.
- Stress.
- Depression.
- Boredom.
- Corruption in the business world and in government.
- A biased—and largely clueless—mass media.
- Unfairness in taxation policies.

- Imperialistic adventurism, and the "blowback" it engenders (see, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chalmers_Johnson).

- Etc.

My position is that these various problems—including global warming—are all an integral part of our societal system. That is, they are not *foreign* elements of our societal system; rather, they are the sorts of problems that one would expect a society such as ours to 'produce"—and it has. This is not to say that those problems existed 200 years ago in this country—or even *could* have existed then. It *is* to say, however, that the seeds of those problems existed in our society 200 years ago, and that it was only a matter of time before they surfaced.

Given this perspective on our problems as Americans and humans, the logical conclusion is that these problems can be solved only via societal system change—of the right sort, of course. What I propose, then, is the creation of a New Society within the rotten core of our Existing Society. I think that Mark Hertsgaard would agree that such a solution involves "thinking outside the box"![189] Clearly my proposal qualifies as a "radical" one; I would point out, however, that it is "radical" in the primary sense of that word (http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/radical)—that of getting to the root of a problem.

Am I contradicting myself here? Is it reasonable to claim, on the one hand, that our society *had* to develop the way it did, because of seeds present in our society 200 years ago, but on the other hand seemingly ignore that "fact" and argue that existing trends need not continue—that we can now *change* our society's direction? I agree that I seem to be "speaking out of both sides of my mouth" here, but my position is that the *dominant* component of our society 200 years ago was not the *only* component.[190] Being a "qualified determinist," I would argue that our society today also contains elements in addition to the dominant ones, and that if some of them will recognize the opportunities that exist today, and act on them, there is hope that our society can begin to move in a different—and better—direction.

I should add that the change that I envision would be accomplished without government involvement;[191] indeed, I foresee that if government plays any role, it will be of a negative nature! Also—and significantly—I foresee that the transition to a New Society would not involve any violence. I should qualify that, however, by stating that although I don't foresee any violence on the part of participants in a New Society Movement (NSM), I *do* foresee the

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[189] *Hot: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011, p. 69.

[190] In a sense, I am making a point here similar to the one Thorstein Veblen [1857 – 1929] made 211 years ago, in distinguishing between two types of employment. "Industrial and Pecuniary Employments," in (pp. 279 – 323) his *The Place of Science in Modern Civilisation and Other Essays*. New York: B. W. Heubsch, 1919. Originally published in *Publications of the American Economic Association* in 1900.

[191] Given the two basic ways of addressing global warming—mitigation efforts and adaptation—I would argue that government could play an important role in mitigation efforts (but is unlikely to!), but that individuals acting as private citizens have an opportunity to engage in both sorts of efforts. My "plan" involves both sorts of efforts, and without any governmental involvement.

possibility of violence being perpetrated by those "left behind"[192] in the Existing Order. That is, those who, for whatever reasons, have been ignoring warnings about global warming, and are suddenly confronted with its reality, may panic and become desperate, in the process attacking those in the NSM. Thus, NSM members would be wise to recognize this possibility, and plan on how they will prevent, insofar as possible, its occurrence. (They may be forced to defend themselves, but should attempt to anticipate danger, and then act to defuse it before it begins.)

If the New Society comes into being without any (positive) government involvement, one interpretation that can be given the process is that it will involve "market" forces! I hope that that fact does not give the neo-classical economists in our midst apoplexy—but it very well may. Their body of theory is built on a number of unstated assumptions, and as the NSM challenges some of those assumptions, they may become mentally imbalanced! Nevertheless, I foresee the progress of the NSM as involving "market" forces,[193] and whether the neo-classical economists also come to see the progress that way is not a matter that will give me sleepless nights.

In creating the New Society, planners and builders should especially have two goals in mind:

- They should address the problem of global warming—planning/acting on both mitigation measures and adaptational ones.

- They should recognize that humans have certain "design specifications," and that their well-being is dependent on having a way of life that accords with those "design specs."

I discussed global warming at some length in Part II, and noted that the solution that I offer involves addressing mitigation and adaptation simultaneously. I agree with James Lovelock that the effects of global warming will become more and more noticeable in the years ahead, so that we will have no choice but to adapt, as best we can, to those effects—and must give adaptation priority. However, we must not neglect efforts at mitigation, and my proposal takes that fact into consideration.

The matter of "design specifications" is discussed in my "But What Should We Discuss?" (http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/05/but-what-should-we-discuss/), along with two other papers that were not posted on this site, but can be obtained from me simply by requesting them. In addition, however, let me at this point add some additional ideas relative to "design specs."

Once one recognizes (likely dimly, at first) that there is a need for societal system change, the first step that needs to be taken is that of the formulation of a "picture" (or pictures) of a Better Society. We moderns typically refer to these hypothetical situations as "utopias," after Sir Thomas More's [1478 – 1535] novel, *Utopia* [1616 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Utopia_(book)], More having chosen that name as a Greek pun on *ou-topos* ("no place") and *eu-topos* ("good place"). In the novel, the descriptor "utopia" was applied to a hypothetical city (Amaurote) within which communalism was practiced. Likely

[192] Perhaps there is a better choice of words here that "left behind," given that Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins http://www.leftbehind.com/ have pre-empted that term, and the meaning that I am giving "left behind" here has little in common with their meaning.

[193] See my discussion of Ralph Borsodi in Part II. (http://dissidentvoice.org/category/global-warming/)

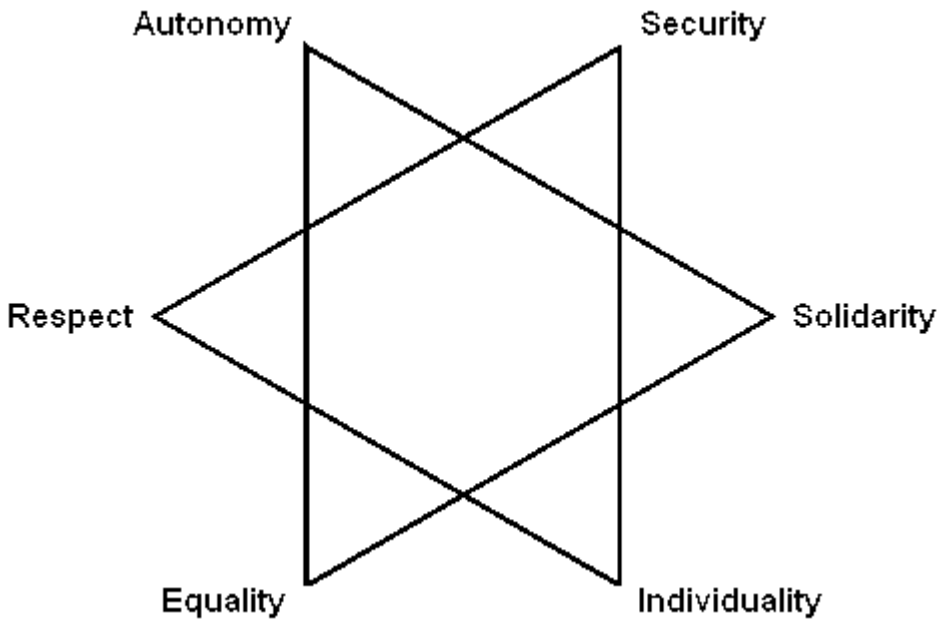
More used monastic communalism as his model in writing the novel, that communalism ostensibly based on the communalism described in the "New Testament" book of *Acts* (2:44 – 45, and 4:32 – 37).

The *idea* of a "better" society precedes More's *Utopia* by centuries, of course, going at least back to Plato's [c428 – 348 BCE] *Republic* [c380 BCE]. In that book (written in the form of a dialogue, featuring Socrates [c469 – 399] as the main speaker), the characters discuss justice, and whether happiness is associated with acting justly or, rather, unjustly; and rule by a philosopher-king is advocated. Since that time numerous other works have been written[194] that present other ideas regarding the "better" society, but I make no effort here to comment further on such works. Rather, I would simply like to note that "utopia" has come to be associated with "impractical," and for that reason I avoid use of that word here. It seems clear to me—and is at least *sensed* by many in our society—that our society could use a good dose of improvement. And although I am writing just a few years after the midterm elections—when many in our society (naively) place their hope in political candidates—I am writing for those who are able to see beyond the superficialities of partisan politics to more fundamental issues.

What are those issues? Different individuals are likely to arrive at different items on their lists, and might prioritize their items differently, but my starting point here is to identify six (6) goals for the "Better"—or "Good," if you will—society, and to present them in conjunction with a 6-pointed star. I make this association for two reasons. First, it calls to mind the Star of David associated with Judaism: although I am not myself Jewish, I have great admiration for Hebrew Scripture—the Law books and books of the prophets, in particular. I have, however, oriented my star differently than that of the Star of David to make clear that it is *not* a Star of David. Second, use of a star figure helps convey the suggestion that the six "goals" are related one to another.

Given that with a 6-sided star a given point has a matching point opposite to it, one can think of the meaning attached to a particular point as being *paired* with the goal associated with the opposite end. Not that one needs to think of the two parts of a given pair as being *opposites* in a conventional sense; they may, or they may not, be—the point (no pun intended, of course!) being that the members of a given pair are perhaps more related to one another than each is to any of the other four goals referenced on the figure.

[194] See, e.g., the massive Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, Utopian Thought in the Western World. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979.



As the figure above indicates, the six goals that I would now identify for the "Better" Society are (in no particular order of importance): autonomy, security, solidarity, individuality, equality, and respect. And note how I have paired these goals: autonomy with individuality, respect with solidarity, and equality with security. In commenting on these six goals, I first comment on each as an individual goal, and then comment on the two components of each of the three pairs.

- *Autonomy* is both an objective condition and a feeling. It refers to an ability to make—or at least participate "significantly" in—decisions that affect oneself (and one's dependents). At present, in our society, I would guess that many feel that they lack autonomy, and are not convinced that voting will make that feeling disappear. Many, I suspect, feel like puppets, with the strings being pulled by the managers-owners of large corporations—working either as agents of those corporations or through government agencies under their control (which they likely think of as including *all* of them!).

- *Security* is also both an objective condition and a feeling. It refers to having one's physical needs met, along with one's need for a certain amount of comfort. And it also refers to the possibility that one will not be attacked physically (or otherwise be in danger) while one is either in one's home or "out in the world."

- Insofar as *Solidarity* is a concept that refers to individuals, it is a feeling that one has relative to other people. If one has a sense of solidarity with others, one feels that one is "on the same page" with them in accepting certain principles for living, and because of that feeling of affinity with others one will be willing to "lend a hand" to others—especially those who one perceives as "on the same page" as oneself. And if one is, oneself, in need of assistance of some type, one feels confident that (at least) a like-

minded other person will provide the needed assistance—without even a need to request help from another. "I'll scratch your back when needed, but I also expect that you'll scratch mine when needed."

- *Individuality* is a trait that, if one values it, one will do so both in oneself and in others. One will not impose "unreasonable" standards on others—which does not mean, though, that one will lack any expectations of others. But insofar as one *does* have certain expectations of others, they are ones that have been mutually agreed upon (by the group—actual or hypothetical—to which one belongs). One will allow oneself as much individuality as one deems necessary (for one's own psychological health), but will do so within the parameters established by the group to which one belongs. (The society within which one lives may also establish certain boundaries, of course, such that if one crosses any of them, one will be subject to arrest and some sort of punishment. Given this, one will also pay attention to those boundaries!)

- *Equality* has both objective and subjective elements, the important one, however, is *feeling* equal to others—and, in turn, regarding *others* as one's equal. An important distinction that comes into play here is differences in *kind* and differences in *degree*. In my interpretation of "equality" here I assume that people will recognize that in terms of some given trait measurable on a *quantitative scale* (such as strength), some will be "higher" than oneself, and others will be "lower." That is, *in*equality will exist—and the general attitude will be "that's just the way it is." However, people will also recognize that others can be thought of as differing in *kind*, in which case no basis exists for declaring that one *kind* of person is "superior" (or "inferior") to another. In the "better" society one will recognize that there are differences in degree, but will *primarily* think of each person as *unique*. In that respect, all would be regarded as *equal*—in both *nature* and in *worth*.

- *Respect* is an attitude, and encompasses both respect for oneself and for others. If one has respect for oneself, one will not be afraid of having one's own thoughts, and of conveying them to others—doing so, however, in a manner that is respectful of those others (i.e., a manner that recognizes that others have *their own* views, and don't want those views criticized in a direct manner). Respect for others involves not just being circumspect in *what* one communicates to others, and *how*, but also how one *acts* relative to others. So that not only does one not inflict any physical harm on others (and attempts to avoid inflicting any psychological harm as well), but one lends help to others in time of need—but in a manner that does not damage the self-respect of the "helpee."

  That we *should*, as Americans, prize diversity was stated well recently by John Nichols (referring specifically to *religious* diversity-toleration):

> The United States was not founded as a country that "tolerated" religious diversity. It was founded as a country that embraced that diversity as one of its greatest strengths, welcoming Christians, Jews and Muslims, believers, nonbelievers and skeptics into a polity where, as George Washington explained, "The government… gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance.[195]

Having now offered some clarification of the meanings of the six goals, let us next make a few comments on each of the three "pairings" identified above:

- *Autonomy – Individuality*

  To have the subjective feeling that one is making the decisions that one is acting upon (while acting within the constraints that one has participated in establishing for one's group—and also the constraints imposed on one by one's society), one needs to have a sense of oneself as a distinct individual. Thus, a sense of individuality is necessary before one can have a sense of autonomy; but as one *exercises* one's autonomy (i.e., actually makes decisions that are then acted upon), one's sense of individuality will increase in strength. Thus, the two goals are interrelated.

- *Respect – Solidarity*

  The concept of solidarity can be applied at both individual and group levels. That is, we can say of a given person that s/he has a feeling of solidarity relative to a certain group, and if such feelings are common within a group, we can characterize the group as a "solidary" one. If a group is to develop as a solidary one, the individuals comprising the group must have respect one for another. Indeed, it is that respect felt by individuals toward other individuals that enables them to form a group in the first place! Once formed, the interaction that occurs among the members—if it continues to be based on respect—likely will lead to a group that becomes more solidary over time. As it becomes such, there is the danger that it will become too much "of one mind," so that tendencies arise to suppress individuality, and deny autonomy to "deviants." On the other hand, a solidary group offers the advantage that it can make decisions for collective action fairly quickly and smoothly, and then act on such decisions in an effective and enthusiastic manner. The "trick" is to find the right degree of solidarity, so that the advantages of such a group do not begin to outweigh the disadvantages—the latter impacting particularly certain individual members of the group.

- *Equality – Security*

  Security, as I indicated above, pertains to the satisfaction of one's sustenance and comfort needs, as well as "security" needs in the more common meaning of the words (i.e., being safe from various types of threats on one's person). If one lives in a society within which

[195] "The Tea Party Constitution Versus the Thomas Jefferson Constitution," posted October 29, 2010, at: http://www.commondreams.org/view/2010/10/29-0. The article originally appeared in *The Nation*.

> each person tends to perceive each other person as a unique person, it follows that no basis exists for perceiving one person as more "important"—or in some other way "better"—than any other person. That is, one will perceive the others in one's society as equal to oneself—neither "superior" nor "inferior." This sort of perception will affect how one interacts with others, in that it one will not only be concerned with one's own security needs, but those of others as well. And with (basically) everyone in the society having a sense of security, the quality of one's interactions with others will tend to be high. Insofar as interactions in our society today are so often characterized by feelings of inferiority-superiority, and those feelings are accompanied by actions involving manipulation, mistreatment, and even violence, I would attribute such actions—ultimately, if not directly—to the actual and felt inequality in our society.[196]

If the above six traits are accepted as ones that one would like to have as common in a "better" society, and the above-mentioned relationships exist within the pairs identified,[197] the first point that I would like to make is that although all six of the above traits can exist in certain individuals (or at least exist in their minds as *ideals*), what's necessary is for them to exist not just in a *few* individuals, but in *most*. In fact, with some of the traits, either they are widespread within a group or they (basically) don't exist at all. For example, it is difficult for one to feel a sense of solidarity toward the others around oneself if their system(s) of values differs significantly from one's own.

As to the "look" of the New Society, what I have in mind is a society that might be thought of as a federation of cooperative eco-communities—a "cityless and countryless" society, to allude to Henry Olerich's old book.[198] Not that I believe that such a society either *can* or *should* be created; but I believe that the *envisioning* of such a society can serve the function of a "Sorelian myth." (See my http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/07/toward-a-new-moral-equivalent-of-war/.) However, most of Part V will be devoted to the discussion of such a society, which posting will include "resurrection" of a "scenario" article that I published in 1984 (!).

A point that I would insist on, for planning purposes, is use of the Structured Interaction Group (SIG), discussed in my "A 'Meaningful' Solution" on this site (http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/04/a-%e2%80%9cmeaningful%e2%80%9d-solution/), and incidentally in two other postings ("More on the Structured Interaction Group" http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/05/more-on-the-structured-interaction-group/ and "Moving to the Right" http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/06/moving-to-the-right/). The first paper in particular identifies possible consequences of SIG participation, including creativity, along with consequences of a psychological and sociological nature. These consequences are of such great

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[196] That extreme inequality has negative implications for a society has been argued recently in Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Greater Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010. Foreword by Robert B. Reich.

[197] It is entirely possible that one will accept the six traits that I have identified, but will "pair" them in a different way. I don't assume that the traits *must* be paired as I have done so.

[198] Henry Olerich, *A Cityless and Countryless World: An Outline of Practical Cooperative Individualism*. Holstein, IA: Gilmore & Olerich, 1893.
http://books.google.com/books?id=5kdYAAAAMAAJ&dq=olerich,+henry+cityless+and+countryless

potential importance that I think that it would be a mistake to proceed, in creating the New Society, without using this institution. To allude, now, to my epigraph (by James Lovelock): the SIG would stimulate thought and discussion, and *that* fact is even more important than any of the recommendations (except for the SIG, of course!) that I make here.

This series will conclude with the next one, in which I discuss my views regarding the New Society more fully.

Part V: The New Society

I cannot emphasize enough here that my proposal here should be taken with the proverbial grain of salt. If is a serious proposal, true, but one that is simultaneously infused with "Sorelian myth" (See the Prefatory Note of Part I http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/07/toward-a-new-moral-equivalent-of-war/.)

In presenting a "picture" of a future society, and a scenario indicating how that society might be achieved, I am not presenting a *blueprint*. Rather, I am simply pointing in a certain *direction*. My goal is to convince the reader that societal system change is note only necessary but *possible*, doing the latter by presenting a *plausible* sequence of events. By doing that my hope is that the reader will take the *possibility* of societal system change seriously, and then begin to act on it.

I make no attempt to present a detailed description of the "look" of a future society, first because I think that it would be *foolish* to do so—for no one can know what our society will be like in, e.g., 50 years. Second, however, I believe it *unwise* to present a detailed "picture" because doing so would *overly direct* (or bias, if you will) people's thinking about the future. The advantage of a *brief* sketch is that it can help people believe that our society *can* be changed as the result of planned efforts, we don't have to simply let "nature take its course." Also, because a brief sketch has potential for "whetting their appetites," they may then be inspired to develop *their own* ideas regarding the direction we should go, and how to get there.

I insist that the Structured Interaction Group (SIG http://dissidentvoice.org/2011/04/a-%e2%80%9cmeaningful%e2%80%9d-solution/) is an ideal vehicle for developing ideas about the future because it can be used to implement the suggestions that I make here, but also be used to develop *other* ideas: It is not an institution that is related *only* to my proposal. It would be foolish of me to suggest that my proposal is the best one conceivable—for I myself would be the first to state that if it were fully realized (which won't happen!), this would be unfortunate! I'm sure that there are others out there who have the potential to develop ideas at least as good as mine, and a SIG can serve as an incubator for such ideas.

Not only can a SIG do that; participation in a SIG can, I'm convinced, benefit the participants in a variety of ways, as indicated in my previous essays. Given that strong possibility, the SIG can be used not only as a vehicle for creating the New Society, but can be an integral part of that society once it is created. That is, there is good reason to *retain* the institution rather than abandon it, once the New Society has been created.

The Twin Oaks "intentional" community[199] near Louisa, Virginian, is a cooperative eco-community (CEC) that has been in existence since 1967. On their website (www.twinoaks.org) is a button for "Policies," and when one clicks on it, one is presented with a list with six categories of policy, one of which is "Property Code." Recently I read that Code, and found that I could agree with only some of the points they listed. Therefore, I decided to write a brief statement that would not only present some principles that I believed important for a group (e.g., a Structured Interaction Group) thinking about creating a CEC, but at the same time identify some of the major steps (in order, so far as possible) that would need to be taken in planning a CEC.

I do not myself live in a CEC, and have no experience living in one; therefore, what I write here should not be taken too seriously. I myself regard them merely as "talking points"—i.e., ideas that could provide a basis for discussion by members of a group intent on planning, and building (or having built), a CEC for themselves (or, perhaps, for others). If the presentation that follows helps a group(s) accomplish their goal of planning a CEC in an efficient and productive way, my purpose will have been met.

Below I present both steps and principles, and make no effort to separate the two:

- The first step would be to decide on the *ownership* question, and here I suggest that all of the community's real property (i.e., land and structures) be owned by a corporation—so that, in a sense, the community's residents would all be "renters" (or at least *like* renters).

- The group would next need to decide how to *finance* the community's creation (i.e., how to pay for the land needed for the community, and how to pay for the construction of any structures that would need to be built).

- Money to meet those expenses could come from the intended residents and/or from individuals/organizations willing to present gifts to the corporation. Money from residents could take the form of outright gifts, the purchase of stock in the corporation, or both. Given that the amount of money available from the above sources might not be enough, solicitation of gifts from members of the Larger Society (individuals and/or organizations) might very well be necessary. Another possible source could be a loan(s), but obtaining a loan might be difficult; and even if some money could be borrowed, it might be advisable to keep this amount low.

- A question inseparable from the financial one is where to build the community, and for what population size—thinking here of the *ultimate* size, rather than the *initial* one.

[199] The founders of this community have attempted to cultivate a sense of continuity with earlier "experiments," and have named their buildings after earlier communal societies. For example, one building is named "Harmony," after the settlement established, in 1803, near Pittsburgh, by Johann Georg ("Father") Rapp [1757 – 1847]. In 1814 the Harmonists bought land on the Wabash River in Indiana, moved from the Pittsburgh area, and established New Harmony. Then, in 1824 they purchased a parcel on the Ohio River north of Pittsburgh, and established Economy, selling New Harmony to famed "utopian" Robert Owen [1771 – 1858].

Depending on how these decisions are made, the amount of money needed for creating the community will be affected. In buying a parcel of land, it might be advisable to purchase at a location where additional adjacent land could be purchased at a later time—so that the initial cost of purchasing land could be minimized.

- Assuming that a corporation is formed which becomes the community's owner, and that some of the corporation's initial capital has been obtained by selling stocks, I advise first that stocks be sold only to prospective residents of the community. Second, I advise that all adult members of the community have an equal voice in the community's decision-making, regardless of how much of an investment one had in the community. The number of stocks owned would have relevance only if a need arose to liquidate the corporation, whereupon the proceeds of the community's disposition would be allocated proportional to amount of stock ownership.

- Before an actual purchase of land occurs the intended residents should decide, for the community to be created, how self-sufficient they should try to make it, and what they should, and should not produce. I assume that the individuals involved would be committed to a "voluntary simplicity" existence, which fact would have implications for the decisions they made on these matters. I should add that given impending changes due to global warming, serious thought should be given to developing skills in gathering and hunting—skills that our distant ancestors had.

- In choosing a location for a community, consideration should be given to the strong possibility—probability, actually—of global warming; thus, sites near coasts should be avoided, along with areas projected by climate scientists to suffer severe drought conditions. James Lovelock—writing from an Englishman's perspective—has stated, relative to this: "The northern regions of Canada, Scandinavia, and Siberia, where not inundated by the rising ocean, will remain habitable, and so will oases on the continents, mostly in mountain regions where rain or snow still fall."[200]

- The group would need to decide how to meet their housing needs. For example, should one dormitory-like building be created, buildings with several apartments each, or a structure for each family? How would singles and gays be accommodated? What materials should be used, and how should structures be designed? Should earth sheltering be employed, if the site chosen permits this? How much housing space should be allotted to each individual? Who should do the construction? Energy efficiency would presumably be a major consideration in making some of these decisions; more broadly, ecological considerations would play an important role.

[200] *The Vanishing Face of Gaia: A Final Warning*. New York: Basic Books, 2009, p. 17.

- Also prior to "taking the leap" the intended residents should agree that there would be certain necessary tasks to perform; and that although those tasks could not be identified with any precision beforehand, they agreed that all adults would spend an equal number of hours per week in performing those tasks. Exceptions might be made for special cases, but a sharing of the necessary work would be mandatory.

- The group should agree beforehand that specific work "assignments" would be developed once the community had been created. The fact that individuals had different skills and interests would be recognized; but also, an effort would be made to rotate the adult members of the community through the community's necessary tasks—for concerns other than efficiency should be given primary attention. An attempt would be made to reach a consensus regarding who did what, and when.

- As an individual could spend more than the required number of hours working during a week, this fact would be recognized by recording, for each individual, the number of hours worked during any given week. Despite the fact that some tasks might be more "important" than others, an hour of work doing one task would be regarded as an hour of work doing any other task.

- Although various required tasks would provide employment to residents, I would advise that none of those tasks be hired out to "outsiders." On the other hand, I have no objections to a resident having his/her own private business—so long as that business is small (i.e., the individual has no employees). Also, I believe it advisable to allow some residents to obtain "outside" jobs. Having such a job would not, however, excuse one from performing one's "necessary" community tasks. Given that allowing both of these possibilities has the potential of leading to envy on the part of those doing neither, those who take advantage of those opportunities should be sensitive to that possibility. Indeed, I would hope that they would perceive such activities as being done for the sake of the community, rather than themselves. That is, they engaged in the activities, not because they wanted personal gain but, rather, because they received psychological satisfaction from doing so.

- I assume that the community would not only produce for the needs of community members (trying to be as self-sufficient as possible), but would also produce some excess—but as the result of efficient production, not excessively long hours of work. Initially, this excess would be sold to those on the "outside;" but over time the community would attempt to reduce its dependence on the "outside" (not only in terms of selling, but also buying "inputs" and finished goods). This would be done by contacting nearby CECs, and making arrangements with them for inter-CEC trade. As this occurred, different CECs would be able to develop different specializations, although all would

attempt to maintain a certain degree of self-sufficiency and a "voluntary simplicity" way of life. http://www.choosingvoluntarysimplicity.com/

- To enable such a development to occur, once a CEC had become established it should work for a proliferation of CECs near its own location, providing whatever financial and technical support it was able to provide.

- A some point in development some CECs might be able to specialize in providing at least basic medical and dental services, but in the initial stages of development there would be a need for a CEC to provide medical and dental insurance for its residents. Presumably, members would make an effort to eat healthily, get sufficient exercise, and otherwise be interested in their health, so that the need for such services would be reduced. But as one ages, one reaches a point where such care *is* needed. (I'm rapidly getting there myself!)

- I assume that meals would be prepared in a community kitchen, and served in a community hall. This would not only enable the serving of nutritious meals, but enable the realization of efficiencies in food preparation. An attempt would be made to have some variety for each meal, and the special dietary needs of some members would be considered.

- During free time residents would be permitted to engage in whatever (legal) activities they wanted, consistent with the mores established by the community, although cultural activities (forming musical groups, theater groups, etc.) would be encouraged. (As a former French horn player, and lover of classical music, cultural activities are highly important to me.)

- Given that residents have a deep interest in ecological issues, they would recognize that world population growth was a problem, and therefore would agree that a two-child family was preferable—and that adoption was a preferred method for achieving that goal. They would rightly regard eugenics measures abhorrent.

- One type of contact with "outsiders" that might occur is that, given that I perceive a CEC as a secular institution, some members might want to attend a nearby church of their choice. Such a desire should not meet with any objections on the part of the other community residents.

Let me add three more points to this list:

- They should recognize that small size has many positive correlates—as Kirkpatrick has pointed out in his massive (!) book on the virtues of smallness[201]—and keep in mind that the ultimate size of their community should be no more than about 500 inhabitants. Insofar as a given community serves as a temporary refuge for "climate refugees," this limit might be passed temporarily at times. But if this happens, an effort should be made eventually to reduce the community's size to a "proper" one again in the near future.

- From a sociological standpoint the efforts of community planners/builders should be to make their community a "family of families." That is, I see no necessity in abandoning the family as an institution—quite the contrary, in fact. An effort, however, should be made to give the community the feel of a super family. A major problem of contemporary society is that it engenders feelings of insecurity in its inmates; community planners/builders should make an effort to "design for security"—not only in the sense of providing safety to residents, but a feeling of family, belongingness.

- I have no objections to "ecological company towns" (ECTs) being created, so long as they avoid the paternalism, exploitation, etc. of past company towns. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Company_town

As the above discussion should make clear, a rather large number of decisions would need to be made before actions could begin, and because many of those decisions would be interrelated, it would not be possible to make them in a clear sequence. Likely discussion would begin on one matter, then switch to another, to still another . . ., with the discussion then coming back to the original subject, with this process continuing until a number of decisions were made—and almost simultaneously. Even after the group had reached a point where they felt comfortable proceeding (in purchasing land, arranging for the construction of buildings, etc.), they still would face many decisions of a practical nature. Only after the community had become established, and had "operated" for some period of time would some routine be established. However, one would hope that life never would become boring for the residents of a given community!

It would be helpful if *Communities* magazine (http://communities.ic.org/), or a newly-established magazine, would record the progress of the New Society Movement (NSM), along with providing helpful information to those planning, or already living in, a CEC or ECT.

How might that progress occur? In 1984 I published a scenario/strategy of societal system change,[202] and I will summarize that article briefly here. I began my article that a book had just been published on "lifestyles,"[203] and that this book contained some useful categories. I argued that a movement for societal system change would need some "pioneers," and that two of

[201] *Human Scale*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1980.

[202] "Ecotopia: A 'Gerendipitous' Scenario," *Transition: The Quarterly Journal of S.E.R.G.E.* (The Socially & Ecologically Responsible Geographers), Vol. 14, no. 2 (Summer 1984), pp. 2 – 8.

[203] Arnold Mitchell, *The Nine American Lifestyles*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1983.

Mitchell's lifestyle categories appeared to be particularly promising for providing such individuals—those in the "Societally Conscious" and "Experiential" categories. Because I had taken a Population course (in the Sociology Department) while a student at the University of North Carolina, I was familiar with migration concepts, and used those concepts, along with Mitchell's categories to develop a scenario of societal system change—what I called a "pull, push, pull, push, drag" scenario.

As I thought about our society, it occurred to me that retired people might be especially suitable for "Wave" One—the "Societally Conscious" and "Experientials" among them, specifically. For not only do they have incomes independent of jobs; they may at least sense that any technologically-oriented society involves change which renders the old obsolete and worthless—so that they have a good motive for exiting the Larger Society. I was also encouraged by Philip Slater's statement: "Older adults have a vested interest in finding a place for themselves in the new society, and whatever place they find will provide a model for new-culture adherents as they age."[204]

Wave Two I also thought of as involving retirees, but lower-income ones who might be less well-informed, but individuals dissatisfied with their current place of residence—whether because of dwelling unit quality (lack of!) or an unsafe neighborhood. Because such individuals would likely not be well-informed, they would need to be actively recruited by "First Wavers."

The NSM might now have achieved a magnitude (in numbers of people) that it could attract—as Wave Three—people of all ages. I would expect that in particular would "Societally Conscious" and "Experiential" people of "productive" age could be attracted to the movement during this phase. The inclusion of a broader age group would mean, of course, that such issues as child rearing and schooling would now come to the fore.

It is during Wave Four that the Movement could begin to attract significant numbers. During this phase the effort would be made to attract people who are currently "working class." I say "currently" to emphasize the point that once those individuals would enter the Movement, they would cease being "working class"—because of the basically egalitarian nature of the Movement. If there was a "making of the working class"[205] during the Industrial Revolution, there would be an unmaking of same during this transition to a New Society.

As my discussion of Ralph Borsodi in Part II should make clear, with many in the "working class" now being a part of the Movement, those remaining in the Larger Society (no longer that!) would be "dragged" into the Movement. They would, however, be welcomed into the Movement—so long as they relinquished their conviction of being superior, and their habits of domination. This, then, would be Wave Five.

It goes without saying if a process of societal system change were to be initiated along the lines of the about scenario, change would occur in an evolutionary manner that would be unpredictable. My hope is that any such modifications made to the scenario would be of a

[204] *The Pursuit of Loneliness: American Culture at the Breaking Point*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970, p. 143.

[205] An allusion to E. P. Thompson's book with that title.
http://books.google.com/books/about/The_making_of_the_English_working_class.html?id=l2aLyk-kacIC

positive nature, from the perspective of the two goals of (a) addressing the threat of global warming while simultaneously (b) attempting to build a society offering a way of life more in accord with human design specifications.

As to criticisms (or potential criticisms) to my plan (besides that it is too "radical"![206]), I will identify—and respond—to five here. First, several decades ago Alvin Toffler, in discussing "future shock,"[207] was (p. 2) referring to a phenomenon induced "in individuals by subjecting them to too much change in too short a time." In referring to change as an "elemental force," Toffler implied that change was irresistible, a virtual law of nature. However, he was somewhat ambivalent regarding the matter of change, for he then went on to add that we must learn to "control the rate of change" in our "personal affairs as well as in society at large," or "we are doomed to a massive adaptational breakdown." Toffler failed to make clear here whether he was referring to the *amount* of change that had occurred or the *rate* of change; what he seemed to be suggesting, however, was that the *rate* of change (a) was excessive, (b) could be reduced, and that (c) an effort should be made to reduce it.

Toffler's attitude toward those having difficulty coping with change seemed to be somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand it seemed to be somewhat Social Darwinian in that he seemed to perceive those able to cope as the "fit" and those having difficulty coping with change as the "unfit" (used in a pejorative sense). On the other hand, however, he seemed to feel some measure of compassion for the "unfit" because he devoted Chapter 17 ("Coping With Tomorrow," pp 319 – 341) to a number of different coping strategies: Direct Coping, Personal Stability Zones, Situational Grouping, Crisis Counseling, Half-Way Houses, Enclaves of the Past, Enclaves of the Future, and Global Space Pageants. At least one cannot fault Toffler for not being creative!

Where Toffler came closest to expressing a condescending attitude toward what might be thought of as communities similar to Cooperative Eco-Communities was in his discussion of Enclaves of the Past. (Of course, the comparison is not perfect, because Toffler was writing at a time when global warming was on the "mental maps" of but a few individuals.) Toffler stated that these Enclaves would be (p. 335) communities "in which turnover, novelty and choice are deliberately limited." Life in these communities would be slow-paced, relaxed, less stimulating (i.e., dull!). Toffler came close to saying that such communities would be created for the slow-witted dregs of society. Given this, his variety of compassion was of a rather peculiar sort—but not one unknown n the history of the West. Toffler added that such communities should not be thought of derisively but, rather (p. 336), "should be subsidized by the larger society as a form of mental and social insurance." Thus, it appears that from Toffler's perspective, the people living in such communities would have no value *in themselves*; rather, the communities would house unimportant people, and in effect be mental wards! They had the advantage of being good for the "unfit" people who inhabited them, while simultaneously being good for the society—in that they would provide a sort of insurance for those living in the larger society. Just *how* Toffler did not make clear, however.

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[206] *Why* is it radical?! See, e.g., John Nichols, *The "S" Word: A Short History of an American Tradition . . . Socialism*. New York: Verso, 2011.

[207] *Future Shock*. New York: Random House, 1970. The term "future shock" was coined by Toffler, and first used by him in an article (1965) in *Horizons* magazine.

Were Toffler writing about the future now, I'm not sure what he would say relative to what he wrote in 1970. But if *Future Shock* is considered in the light of our current world situation, it comes across as a naïve, ignorant book. A book that shows no awareness of The Discrepancy, of "design specifications," or the threat of global warming. Thus, even if some in our midst might cite Toffler in criticizing my Cooperative Eco-Community "plan," it would be foolish of them to do so.

Second, some might argue that my "plan" is so radical that it is simply beyond the scope of everyday thinking; therefore, the "plan" has no chance of being taken seriously. I realize that there is merit in such an argument, but would point out that at least since the time of Plato, some individuals have developed critiques of the then-Existing Order, with some of them also devising "pictures" of their concept of a Better Society.[208]

Third, I would point to those who think my "plan" is "off the wall" that intentional communities have played an important role in American history (e.g., http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1989/1/89.01.04.x.html and http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/dictionary/index.asp?action=view&term_id=995&term_type_id=1&term_type_text=People&letter=U). For example, Dolores Hayden, in her important *Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790 – 1975*, [209] lists (in Appendix B, pp. 362 0 365) 130 such communities. In addition to Hayden's book there are numerous other books (and articles), including Edward K. Spann's *Brotherly Tomorrows: Movements for a Cooperative Society in America, 1820 – 1920*[210] and Donald E. Pitzer, ed., *America's Communal Utopias*.[211]

Fourth, skeptics need to be aware of the fact that there is already, and has been for several decades, a Federation of Egalitarian Communities (http://www.thefec.org/); see also http://www.commonfire.org/community/index.html. Their web site offers information to those interested in joining an existing "intentional" community, or initiating one; and the *Communities* magazine that they publish also provides valuable information on the subject. In addition, this organization publishes a directory of intentional communities in this country and elsewhere (the 6th edition is the one currently available), which publication gives one a good idea of how many such communities exist, and where.

Fifth, a criticism that might be directed at my proposal is that it is asking them to do something that is just plain "unnatural;" that the "American Dream" is to live in a single-family home, and that most of do. What such people need to know is that this "American Dream" was created as part of a propaganda effort on the part of the Hoover administration in the 1930s. "President [Herbert] Hoover organized a national Conference on Home Building and House Ownership in 1931, dedicated to a campaign to build single-family houses in the private market as a strategy

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[208] See, e.g., the massive Frank E. Manuel and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979.

[209] Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1976.

[210] New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

[211] Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

for promoting greater economic growth in the United States and less industrial strife."[212] Also (p. 283): "Industrialists began to consider the strategy of offering white male skilled workers small suburban homes, to be purchased on home mortgages, as a way of achieving greater industrial order." (Figure 13.1 on p. 283 shows the title page of a booklet put out by Industrial Housing Associates in 1919: "Good Homes Make Contented Workers"!)

A question that might arise with some is: "What about the rest of the world? Other countries will be affected by global warming as well, and what should we do about that fact?" I have three suggestions to make regarding that matter:

- Encourage individuals in other countries to study what we are doing here.

- Lend whatever assistance we can to people in other countries—doing so, however, in a sensitive way that does not involve imposing our will on others.

- Cooperating with other country's governments in addressing the refugee problem that is likely to arise.

What are the prospects for my "plan"? Paul Gilding (formerly head of Greenpeace International) has stated that "As a species, we are good in a crisis . . . ."[213] When (p. 6) "our backs are against the wall, all the great qualities of humanity, our compassion, our drive, our technical brilliance, and our ability to make things happen on a massive global scale, come strongly to the fore." When (p. 58) we respond to the global warming crisis, "it will be with breathtaking speed and scale, and it will drive the biggest economic and industrial transformation in history."

Gilding uses (p. 110) "the example of World War II as evidence of what we are capable of, both economically and physically and in terms of sudden political shifts." Gilding recognizes that, unlike Adolf Hitler, "climate is hard to personify and is something for which we ultimately have only ourselves to blame." He concludes, however: "But on closer inspection, while there are some real differences, there are not as many as you might think, and there are many lessons and great encouragement in that experience." "Without the benefit of a retrospective view," continues Gilding (p. 111), "it would be much harder to predict when exactly the denial of Hitler's threat would end. So it's also hard to predict when the moment will come on climate, even though in hindsight, it will be 'obvious.'"

Gilding has had wide-ranging experiences, and has occupied important positions; therefore, it would be foolish to ignore his statements. My thinking, however, has been more influenced by James Lovelock—a genuine, and noted, scientist—and I therefore share Lovelock's pessimism. Besides, I'm convinced that my "plan" is more promising (in potential positive effects) than anything Gilding offers.

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[212] Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991, p. 275.

[213] *The Great Disruption: Why the Climate Crisis Will Bring On the End of Shopping and the Birth of a New World*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011, p. 2.

Still, the question is whether my "plan" has any chance of being implemented, and this is another area where I am pessimistic. The current political—and general—climate (no pun intended!) in our society seems rather unfavorable for *any* efforts to address this problem: Peter Shumlin (Governor of Vermont) is a rare exception among politicians. (See, e.g, http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/the_gops_sick_priorities_20110712/.) "Denial" propaganda seems to be given as much attention by the media as solid scientific work. And if my "plan" *does* get initiated, various interests in our society may do all in their power to squelch it. (That such a possibility should be of concern—that we are moving in a police-state direction—is suggested by a recent Chris Hedges column http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/carlos_montes_and_the_security_state_a_cautionary_tale_20110710/.) In addition, if the "plan" gets initiated, as global warming results in more and more people becoming miserable and desperate, they may use violence against those in the Movement.

If intelligent, enlightened politicians were common in our society, we might be able to minimize the consequences of global warming. But they aren't; and even if they were, the problem of our "unnatural" way of life would not be addressed—or even recognized, for that matter. The only solution potentially capable of addressing both that problem and global warming is the cooperative eco-communitarian one proposed in this essay. And that is why I am "sold" on this solution—but, again, from the perspective of "Sorelian myth."

The above discussion gives one little basis for hope, but there *is* some reason to have hope: The pathetic state of our economy at present—with so many unemployed (likely over 20% http://www.eutimes.net/2011/03/real-us-unemployment-rate-may-be-22-percent-for-february/ and http://www.counterpunch.org/lindorff07112011.html), people losing their homes, and many homeless (including many veterans http://www.nchv.org/)—provides us with a situation such that if an alternative to the prison we currently live in were offered, many might take advantage of that opportunity. In talking with a neighbor recently—who is from northern Wisconsin, and works in construction—I was surprised—pleasantly so!—to learn how close his thinking is to mine, except that his—currently, at least—more individualistic than mine. This suggests to me that many "ordinary" folk, and perhaps especially those who have grown up in small-town America, could be attracted to my proposal, if presented to them in the right way.

A final point: Solutions have been offered other than the one I offer here (most of them having a technological orientation, with such solutions having been discussed by Lovelock in *Vanishing Face*), but you will need to go elsewhere to learn about them. It's not that I don't think that such solutions have merit; rather, it's because a discussion of such options would lead me too far afield from my principal concern, the necessity—and desirability—of societal system change.

March 28, 2011

Our Primary Problem—and Its Solution

Alton C. Thompson

The fact of overriding importance facing us humans today is that human occupance of Earth presents a threat to many species, including our own. Our occupance of Earth has already resulted in the loss of many species, and many more likely will be lost before the century is out.

The basic reason why our occupance of Earth has been a problem is that too many humans have a *control* mentality rather than an *adaptational* one. An implication of such a mentality is that those having it tend to perceive elements of Earth as "resources"—i.e., things to be *used*—rather than as things to live with, enjoy, draw spiritual inspiration from, etc.

Some in our midst have a qualified version of this mentality, indicated by the fact that they divide "resources" into two categories—renewable "resources" and non-renewable ones. And although their making of this distinction has some merit, it retains the basic perceptual problem—that of thinking of Earth elements just in *utilitarian* terms.

I will grant that any species—including, most certainly, our own—must "use" the Earth if it is to survive. But if a species is to continue to exist, it must do its "using" in a "responsible" manner—else that "using" may pose problems, "down the road," not only for itself, but for other species besides.

With most species, mechanisms have evolved that result in "responsible" use automatically. And it would appear that humans were also (basically) governed by such a mechanism prior to the Agricultural Revolution (10,000 years ago).

But as humans developed (not via conscious efforts, of course) larger brains and an ability to communicate more effectively, their previous existence—which had been largely "in tune" with Earth's rhythms—began to become ever more discordant with those rhythms—in large part as the *direct* "fruit" of technological and sociological developments. This discordancy began to become especially noticeable with the Industrial Revolution (about 1750 CE).

Some might attribute *that* Revolution to the increasing influence of Protestant thought, and the rise of capitalism as an economic system. But whatever the specific reasons for this increased discordance, the fundamental facts of importance are that (a) discordance has become ever more pronounced over time, and (b) societal leaders—in the economy and in government—increasingly have become individuals "possessed"—literally!—by a control mentality.

This latter fact especially bodes ill for the human future (to say nothing of other species). For it means that their "leadership" is short-sighted and limited in scope (even irrational!), resulting in actions that are bringing us ever closer to the brink of extinction.

If we are to be "saved" from extinction (and, unfortunately, there is no assurance that we *can* be), we must first come to the realization that our leaders are not educable; and that given this, it

would be foolish to try to educate—to "convert"—them. And would be equally foolish to attempt to replace them with another set of leaders (likely to be in the same mold).

There is but one answer (assuming that there even *is* one!), and that is to exit from the societies that these individuals "lead," doing so to the degree that their support evaporates—so that they no longer have followers!

This "exiting" cannot be to another planet, of course; it must occur on Earth—but need not involve an egress to another country. Indeed, all *such* an egress would involve would be to change one's leaders, thereby accomplishing nothing.

What must be done instead is to make an exit from one's Larger Society to subsocieties *within* one's Larger Society—doing so in a manner that would result in a withdrawal of one's (a) consumer support, (b) labor support, and (c) taxation support of the Larger Society, on the one hand; and the development, on the other hand, of a way of life in a subsociety that would be respectful of Earth (among other goals). If an attractive option is developed, it should be able to attract millions in our society, given the huge numbers in our society who are unemployed, ill-employed, and employed on but a part-time basis (likely in a "crummy" job)—to say nothing of those who are simply dissatisfied with life in the Larger Society.

By exiting in this "Bordodian" way (after Ralph Borsodi; see his Flight From the City, 1933), and doing so in sufficient numbers, one would actually be creating a New Society whose growth would act somewhat like a cancer in destroying the Larger Society, thereby driving its leaders from power, with the New Society then replacing the Larger Society—and becoming, thereby, the *new* Larger Society!

Can this occur? Yes, I believe that it can. But *will* it? That's another matter! Unless the appropriate leadership arises—and soon—it won't. One thing *is* certain, however: Unless it does, I believe that our species—along with numerous others—will be extinct by 2100 CE (or shortly thereafter); for I see no other possible path to "salvation" than the one that I am proposing here. If there *is* another—and a better—path, I, for one, would like to know about it!! Please let me know what it is!

Getting Real About Our Relationship to the Environment

An Attempt at Collecting My Thoughts About the Matter

Alton C. Thompson

Although thinking about the environment in "resource" terms reflects a utilitarian perspective on the environment, the fact of the matter is that our situation today requires—for our very survival as a species—that we use a "resource" perspective in thinking about the environment today.

Given this, it is useful to think of "resources" as renewable and non-renewable. Extraction of the former can potentially continue indefinitely so long as the rate of extraction per year does not exceed the rate of renewal—it being wise to have the extraction rate at some point below the maximum, given that the rate of renewal can be expected to vary.

The total amount of extraction (of a renewable) during a given year can be expressed as A x B, where A = per capita usage for the year and B = the total number of people. If this product exceeds the maximum "allowable," it can be reduced by stabilizing the B value and reducing the A value. Reducing the B value would be desirable simply from the standpoint of minimizing crowding, and this should only be done by reducing the birth rate: the responsible person will produce his replacement, and no more, with some producing no replacement.

The typical person does not know what A value is associated with him/or because what s/he consumes has been produced by someone else (usually a company), then transported—eventually—to the retail facility from which the purchase was made.

Non-renewable resources are different because their total quantity is fixed. Granted that deposits vary in the degree of difficulty—and cost—associated with extraction, and as extraction proceeds to more difficult deposits, it becomes more costly, and these costs are passed along to firms which use the raw materials, which then pass their added costs along to ultimate consumers. With some manufactured products it is possible to recover the raw material used to manufacture it (once the product has become worn out or obsolete)—and either use that recovered raw material in the same product or some other product. And the cost of recovery may be less than the original cost of extraction.

If B remains stable over time and the per capita usage of a given raw material also remains stable over time, it is conceivable that the raw material will never "run out;" for once extraction has ended, recycling begins to take its place—so that the raw material is continually available. But if B increases over time while A remains constant, the raw material will become increasingly scarce, and that will mean that its price will—so that consumer products using it will necessarily increase. If B remains stable while A increases, the same result will obtain. And if both A and B increase, the situation will be exacerbated.

Some non-renewables extracted become raw materials in manufactured products, but other ones are extracted for the purpose of providing energy—for running machinery, for lighting and heating buildings, for operating automobiles and trucks, etc. Such resources represent a special case because (a) they cannot be recycled and (b) their use (which involves burning) involves

moving carbon that had been safely locked below the earth's surface to the atmosphere—where it causes "global warming." And that has implications that are currently resulting in the extinction of many species, and likely will result in our demise as well—unless we humans stop putting CO_2 into the atmosphere.

The use of carbon fuels must cease. Given that the B value must be taken as a "given"—and that it is even reasonable to assume that it will *increase* over time—the use of carbon fuels can cease only if people stop using them. If one continues in one's current place of residence, one can help bring one's per capita use down by consuming less (thus reducing one's responsibility for the use of such fuels in producing and transporting what one is consuming). But one will still be using such fuels in the heating of one's home and in the operation of one's automobile; even if one uses public transport, given that it uses fossil fuel, one still makes a "contribution" to pollution). The conclusion here: *in situ* adjustment simply cannot, at present, result in the reduction of one's "contribution" to zero.

Given this conclusion, it should be evident that one's only option is either to move to where one can become entirely self-sufficient (using wood or some other renewable resource as one's fuel for heating, etc.), or move to a community established with the goal of community-sufficiency. In either case, one will end one's dependence on the outside world, and become entirely dependent on the resources available within a very small area. Implying that if that area is retained over time, the population will not be allowed to grow.

In doing this one likely would need to eliminate entirely one's dependency on any non-renewable resources, and depend only on renewable ones—wood, and soil, and animals (for food) being the ones now used to satisfy all of one's needs.

Doing the above might seem like a drastic course of action—and it would be. However, not only would such "exiting"—if done by enough people—help reduce the threat of ecocatastrophe. In addition, it would enable the creation of a new Social Order, one not dependent on the exploitation of some by others. As this New Order is created, and developments are made in alternate (non-polluting) fuels, this will enable a raising of the material standard of living. But if the building of the new Social Order involves creation of an egalitarian society, the need for status-seeking will disappear, and the excess consumption associated with that motivation will also disappear.

The transition to this New Order will require special people as the early pioneers—individuals willing to live at a low material standard of living. In addition, they need to be individuals with an inclination to engage in the development of alternate sources of energy. Unless such pioneers appear on the scene—and soon—we humans are doomed.

It should be obvious that this exiting will not occur as the result of a government program—a new New Deal. Nor will the leaders of most corporations be interested in sponsoring this exiting. The exiting will need to be done by those who see the need for it and have the financial ability to buy the necessary land, etc. Ideally, it would take the form of community-building, and focus not only on energy production but the establishment of a social order that would use our "design specifications" as the guide for planning; and the planning should involve the use of the SIG.